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THE TRUTH OF THE APOSTOLIC GOSPEL

THE TRUTH

OF THE

APOSTOLIC GOSPEL

BY

PRINCIPAL

R. A. FALCONER, D. LITT.

NEW YORK:
The International Committee of Young Men's
Christian Associations
1904

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PREFATORY NOTE

The aim of this course is much less pretentious than to furnish a complete system of Christian apologetic. In accordance with the request which was made of him, the author has simply drawn up a series of studies, as far as might be from the New Testament itself, for the purpose of setting forth the essence and strength of the Gospel which is its heart. While the difficulties of the college student have been kept steadily in view, it is hoped that others may find equally well that these pages help them to understand some of the convincing reasons, which we have to-day more than ever, for believing in the truth of the Apostolic Gospel. *The New Testament in Modern Speech,* by Richard Francis Weymouth, may be recommended as a useful aid for these studies.

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INTRODUCTORY

STUDY 1. ATTITUDE AND SOURCES

Study 1: Attitude and Sources

First Day: All Truth is One and Spiritual

1. The genuine student is eager in the search for truth. He believes that everything must approve itself to his reason. Science has made such gigantic strides, and has by its magnificent generalizations so brought home to the modern mind the unity of nature, that its laws are regarded as the abiding objective truth, whatever be our likes or dislikes, our superstitions or prejudices. Other things may change, the laws of nature are permanent. For if our hypotheses have to be abandoned from time to time, it is not the underlying law which is supposed to be capricious, and we do not desist from the search until some more permanent hypothesis is discovered. So to-day the old atomic theory is yielding to a grander generalization as to the structure of matter.

2. Equally zealous is the philosophic student to discover the laws of mind. Persuaded that human life can be unified and explained in terms of reason, he traces through the systems that change from age to age, a pervading and ever clearer principle. Deeper and truer inductions in the realm of pure thought, psychology, or the process of history displace the philosophic structures of the past, which are proving too strait for the amplitude of present knowledge and experience.

3. Truth is a term that is too often narrowed in its range. Truths of science are only a part of the whole of truth; truths of philosophy are only a part of the whole of truth. Both science and philosophy must include in their survey the truths of the other realms of nature before giving forth their final results as the truth. For no part of truth can conflict with any other part of truth. So no hypothesis of science or philosophy is truth if it clashes with the largest meaning of man's life.

4. According to the Bible man is of such supreme value, his essential worth is so great, and his destiny so glorious, that the world of nature is merely the stage on which man's character is disciplined (Ps. 8:3-9; Matt. 6:32, 33; 16:26; 24:35; John 1:1-4, 10; 17:5, 24; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3). Nature is regarded as sympathetic to the crises in the Kingdom of God (Ps. 104:1-10; Matt. 24:29-31; Rom. 8:19-22). Therefore since the purposes of God for the kingdom of humanity are supreme, no scientific or philosophic theory can be correct which conflicts with the principles of God's moral rule. Truth must in its last issue have a spiritual interpretation.

Study 1: Attitude and Sources

Second Day: Faith a Universal Principle of Life

1. Faith is a word which is greatly misunderstood. Many suppose it to be confined to the domain of religion. But this is not so. All scientific deductions presuppose faith. We believe that we are justified in formulating a law on the basis of a large number of similar events having taken place. This, however, rests on the assumption that nature is uniform—to our minds a perfectly reasonable postulate. Similarly we assume that our faculties may be trusted. Indeed we conduct our life on the principle that Reason is the supreme Director of existence. This is faith.

2. Therefore the highest form of faith must be reliance on the truest principles of Reason. Now we are conscious that our moral and spiritual nature is our noblest possession. We find then the supreme Reason in that which harmonizes our experience and coördinates our life in their widest range. Just as we trust our faculty of pure thought in order to arrive at the truths of natural science or of the mind, so we trust our moral and spiritual faculty to manifest to us the truth of the spiritual realm. We assume that religious faith ushers us into the highest truth of all, the knowledge of a personal God whose fellowship satisfies the most persistent longings of our hearts. It would be irrational not to make this assumption (Heb. 11:1-3, 27).

3. Religion is the crown of life. It is that act of our manhood in the exercise of its fullest powers of thought, will and affection, whereby we enter, transient and feeble creatures though we seem to be, into conscious fellowship with the eternal God. From Him alone life has any meaning. Our reason compels us to believe that His will directs all things, and therefore that we should obey Him. "In His will is our peace." The Bible always assumes that there is a righteous God, that man is a responsible being, and knows the difference between right and wrong. Man shares the knowledge of God in His conscience. He can know the truth and therefore is in duty bound to exercise faith (Acts 14:15-17; 17:22-31; Rom. 1:18-25).

A fine treatment of this subject is to be found in "Reason and Revelation," by J. R. Illingworth.

Study 1: Attitude and Sources

Third Day: The Truth of the Gospel is Self-Evident

1. Just as there are certain truths of natural science and philosophy which by elucidation become obvious, so there are truths of religion which intrinsically constrain those who are healthy-minded to believe them. Throughout the New Testament it is assumed that the Gospel is such a body of truth (Mark 1:15). The gospel is proclaimed as the truth which brings life eternal (John 14:6; Rom. 6:17, 22). Jesus expresses surprise that men do not accept His gospel (Mark 6:6), but neither He nor His disciples use any compulsory methods for spreading it. The truth will win its way in the hearts of men (John 18:37). No attempt is made to preach any gospel which does not appeal to men's faculty for discerning truth. Facts are stated in a most positive manner, and mysteries are revealed in full confidence that they will meet with a response in the hearts of men.

2. How came it then that many did not believe Christ? If the gospel is the truth of life, why does not everyone accept it? The New Testament accounts for this unbelief by the fact of sin. An irrational element has invaded the moral nature. Sin deceives the heart (Luke 8:14, 15; John 3:16-21; Eph. 4:17, 18; Heb. 3:13; James 1:15). If men refused to follow Jesus it was because the truth of His life, the strength and beauty of His character, and the glory of His message could not counteract their sinful love of this world. This is the only reason the gospels offer for such incomprehensible conduct.

3. A truly moral man must be religious, for there is none good but one, that is God (Mark 10:18), and the religious nature craves for fellowship with Him. We need not deny that we can learn of God through the truths of nature and philosophy, for God is immanent in the world, but our souls thirst for the living God. The classic expression of this yearning is found in the Old Testament Psalms (16; 42:1, 2; 116:4-7). Our human reason is not satisfied till it finds rest in the love of God our Holy Father. Now the heart of the gospel is that it brings to men the assurance of eternal life in fellowship with Him who is the Truth (Matt. 11:27-30; John 14:23; 16:33; Rom. 8:31-39).

Study 1: Attitude and Sources

Fourth Day: What Manner of Man is the Searcher After Truth?

1. What are the qualifications of him who would investigate the truth of the gospel? First, he must accept the testimony of the moral nature of man as leading him up to God. The gospel itself is one of the strongest evidences of the being of God, and should strengthen the wavering belief in God of any one whose moral nature is not atrophied. Truth must be loved; Sin must be abhorred; and longing to escape from the sin which estranges us from God, the truthseeker must cry, Create in me a clean heart (Ps. 51).

2. The world must be interpreted in the light of a personal God. The Kingdom of God is the crown of creation, therefore all life leads up to and prepares for that eternal purpose. This is a demand of our religious nature. It is an assumption in the Bible. Therefore the laws of physical science cannot be erected into an absolute standard of truth, irrespective of the higher necessities of man's religious nature. The moral facts of life must be considered before the laws of nature are formulated, and man's spiritual destiny is as imperious in its conditions as is his physical environment. Hence the worthy student of the gospel must divest himself of rigid theories, as for example that miracles cannot happen. This may be prejudice from insufficient induction covering only one department of life. Whatever best furthers the purpose of God's love for man is reasonable. Therefore we must approach the supernatural in the New Testament with an open mind.

3. The genuine searcher after truth must be a man of prayer. Prayer is simply intercourse with God. It is an opening of the heart to receive His Spirit, who purifies by His presence the remotest corners of our thought. We cultivate the best that is in us by fellowship with our friends, enlarging our hearts, quickening our minds, refining our natures thereby. Friendship grows with practice. So the culture of the soul demands fellowship with our best Friend. By prayer we rejoice in the love of God. Prayer is the soul's avenue into the Truth (Luke 6:12; 9:29; 1 Thess. 5:17; Eph. 6:10-18).

Study 1: Attitude and Sources

Fifth Day: The Conservative Position with Respect to the New Testament

1. At the opening of our studies we are confronted with this question; Is there any certain ground in the New Testament on which we can take our stand in order to examine the nature and validity of the Apostolic Gospel? Has not recent criticism wrought such havoc with the books of the New Testament, that to start from them as they are would be to begin with an assumption which would be challenged at once? There is, it is true, an extreme school whose scepticism will allow them to accept very little in the New Testament as authentic, but this school is so small and unimportant that it would serve no purpose for us to refer to their conclusions.

2. It is unnecessary in these studies to make an independent examination of the books of the New Testament in order to determine the author of each, the date, and the readers; for our results would be rejected in part at least by men who, one would fain hope, might agree with our main conclusions. The writer of these studies is of opinion that the conservative positions with respect to the New Testament are justifying themselves more and more under the scrutiny of the most careful scholarship. Widespread early tradition is in general found to yield the most satisfactory explanation of the origin of these writings.

3. Conservative critics believe that the books of the New Testament are well within the first century, and present in their present form a thoroughly credible account of the life and gospel of Jesus Christ, and of the work of His Spirit among His disciples in the primitive Church. They hold that three apostolic sources are represented in our four gospels, and that of these the Gospel of John at least was written by an eye-witness. Acts is regarded as the work of a companion of Paul, and therefore a reliable history, and the epistles are assigned to the authors whose names they carry. Of all the epistles 2 Peter is the only one which is seriously questioned by scholars who represent the conservative standpoint, and on this opinion is greatly divided. Perhaps the recent Bible Dictionary, edited by Dr. James Hastings, may be taken as a standard for the conservative position with regard to the New Testament. This appears to be the attitude of the majority of the foremost English-speaking scholars.

Study 1: Attitude and Sources

Sixth Day: The Conservative Scholar is not Necessarily Less Scientific than the Radical

1. But in many minds there is an uneasy suspicion that the conservative point of view is unscientific. The radical school is particularly urgent in preferring this charge. There is, however, no reason why the scientific spirit should be the peculiar possession either of radical or conservative. What is the scientific spirit? It is one which weighs facts and evidence in the most impartial manner, and then by the use of good judgment assigns the relative values to such facts and evidence. Von Ranke said that he would base his history only on what actually happened. But this is an ideal towards which only the greatest of historians even approximate, for the most delicate discernment is required to sift the original facts from the interpretations which have been put upon the facts from the very moment of their happening, and to estimate the truth or error of a tradition.

2. Two scholars approach the New Testament as two judges who are to try a case in law. The same evidence is presented to both, but it appeals very differently to each, and their judgments differ. These two scholars bring with them different convictions or prepossessions. One is professedly a believer in Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour from sin, to whom by a miracle of grace he owes all that is of value in his own life. To this Christ he prays every day, and he believes that His Spirit is moulding his character. The New Testament is the book on which he feeds his spiritual life, for in it he finds Jesus Christ, and in the record of His life he discovers that which satisfies the deepest needs of his soul. The other scholar has little satisfaction in the Christian view of God and the world, or if he accepts the Christian view of God as a loving Father, he is repelled by the apostolic conception of the person of Christ, believes that Jesus could not have been more than a man, and is so imbued with the naturalistic spirit that he practically could not be persuaded by almost any available evidence that miracles can have happened.

3. Now, neither of these is necessarily more scientific than the other. The impartiality and judgment of each is to be determined by the way in which the evidence is dealt with. The conservative scholar shows his scientific spirit and his unbiassed search for truth by his willingness to investigate the grounds of his belief, and his ability to discern what in them is essential or unessential. The one axiom is that his religious life is supreme, and his intellect therefore will not permit him to surrender any facts or beliefs that are of its essence. But this is truly scientific, for his religious life itself has to be accounted for.

Study 1: Attitude and Sources

Seventh Day: The Method and Position Adopted in These Studies

1. Our aim is to consider the phenomena of the New Testament as a whole. Therefore we shall not assume the correctness of the conservative view. But all that is necessary is to take for granted certain positions, which will hardly be questioned by any except those extreme radicals, whom we may safely leave out of consideration at present, though they will not be accepted by conservative scholars as an adequate account of the New Testament.

2. We shall study the Christian life of the period covered by the main body of the New Testament as a definite historical manifestation, the salient features of which will be brought under review in order to discover if possible their essential meaning and motive power; and our interest will be concentrated on the social, moral, and religious conditions of the epoch as a whole, rather than on the detailed progress within the period.

3. For this purpose we shall assume, as with good reason we may, that: (1) These Pauline epistles are undoubtedly genuine—1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans. They were written not earlier than 45 A. D., nof later than 59 A. D.

(2) Philippians, Colossians, Philemon almost certainly, and Ephesians very probably, were written by Paul not later than 64 A. D., and may be employed for depicting the life of the Church in the third quarter of the first century. Indeed we may in ordinary cases use them as sources for Pauline thought.

(3) At the basis of our synoptic gospels there lie two apostolic sources—a Petrine, embodied chiefly in Mark and reproduced in our Matthew and Luke—and a collection of discourses of Jesus attributed to the Apostle Matthew. These were written down before 70 A. D. Our present synoptic gospels, containing these sources as their chief material, were composed independently of one another not later than 90 A. D.

(4) The Book of Acts, the Apocalypse, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the pastoral epistles, the Gospel of John, and the Catholic epistles (with the exception of 2 Peter) were in existence not much later than 125 A. D. Most of them were probably written before the end of the first century, and First Peter, like Ephesians, may confidently be used for apostolic doctrine. (See B. W. Bacon's Introduction to the New Testament.)

4. These books bear witness to the existence between 45 and 125 A. D. of a new type of character, ideals and belief. It is hoped that our studies of these phenomena may serve to show that the apostolic gospel is true, because it is a reasonable and sufficient explanation of the origin and progress of this Christian life and belief.

PART I.

THE PHENOMENA OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Study 2: The Rise of a New Brotherhood

FIRST DAY: RAPID GROWTH IN JEWISH AND GENTILE WORLDS

1. One of the most striking phenomena in history is the appearance of the community of believers in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah of Israel and Son of God (Acts 2:36), and their rapid extension through the Roman world during the first century of our era. Though the leaven at work in Jerusalem by 30 A. D. was a very small particle, its fermenting activity was marvelous.

2. Owing to the vagueness of early chronology an estimate of the rapidity of growth is necessarily uncertain, but the martyrdom of Stephen and the early life of Paul prove that the new religion soon produced a profound impression on the Jewish world. Would a man of the standing of Saul of Tarsus have spent his energy in making havoc of a sect which might be despised? (Gal. 1:13, 14.) Proof of the anxiety on the part of the hierarchy lest the Nazarenes might pervert the populace is afforded by their summary method with Stephen (Acts 6:12; 7:54—8:3).

3. Stephen's death brought the new religion to a parting of the ways. Henceforth the Nazarenes cannot remain a mere sect of Judaism. Persecution scatters far and wide the seed of the Word, which springs up in Samaria, the coast region, and Damascus (Acts 8:4; 9:31ff.; 10:1ff). The new churches, however, are still of the same type as the mother church at Jerusalem, Hebraic rather than Hellenistic in spirit, the converts being, it is probable, almost entirely born Jews, though there were also some proselytes.

4. How should we expect the Church to grow? By the initiative of the apostles? It was not so. (See Acts 11:19-21.) The gospel was carried to various parts of the world as God through the circumstances of life might lead. Thus it is probable that brethren of no eminence among the original circle founded the churches of Rome and Alexandria, as they certainly did that of Antioch, which became the mother church of Gentile Christianity (Acts 11:20).

5. The immense success of Gentile missions forced a new problem upon the Church, which is the leading motive of the earlier epistles of Paul (see esp. Gal. 2:1-12; cf. Acts 15:1, 22). Were the Gentiles to be received by the Jewish Christians without circumcision as brethren on equal terms? The rapid inflow of Gentile converts made the difficulty acute, for they threatened to deprive Jerusalem and the Jewish Christians of their preëminence. Its solution is a fine tribute to the reality of their brotherly spirit.

Study 2: The Rise of a New Brotherhood

Second Day: The Church in the Roman Empire During the First Century

1. Paul the missionary statesman becomes through his conversion the apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:16; cf. Acts 9:15; 22:21), and sets his face towards the west (Rom. 1:13). His purpose led him along the great Roman highways of commerce to cities where Greek was spoken. Seized as he was with the idea of the imperial destiny of Christianity, Paul traversed those provinces in which his Roman citizenship would be of most service, attacking the civilized centers of the world's life, not the remote pagan tribes; and with much success, for shortly the brethren are grouped not only in city churches, such as Ephesus, and Corinth, but under the Roman provinces, "The churches of Achaia, Macedonia" (2 Cor. 8:1; 9:2; see also 1 Peter 1:1).

2. The outbreak of violent persecution is another evidence that the Church had grown rapidly. It came first from the Jews, and for years Paul seems to have regarded the Roman Empire as his protector (Rom. 13:1-7). Is not this impression of the favor of Rome conveyed by Acts? (See Acts 25:10-12.) But the favor was short-lived, for according to Tacitus (Ann. xv., 44), an immense multitude were put to death by Nero (A. D. 64); and a similar policy seems to have extended to the provinces (assuming that 1 Peter was written about this time), and indeed throughout the empire (1 Peter 4:12; 5:9).

3. When the Apocalypse of John was written (not later than the ninth decade of first century), we have the terrible picture of Babylon the great, the mother of harlots (Rev. 17:5, 6). Rome is drunk with the blood of martyrs out of every nation and tribe. Rev. 7:9, 14 shows that the rapid extension of the Church had for some time seemed to the imperial authorities to threaten the empire. Finally in 112 A. D. Pliny, pro-consul of the large region of Bithynia-Pontus, writes to the Emperor Trajan that the rapid spread of Christianity in the preceding years through country, villages, and cities, was such that heathen temples were deserted, and measures should be taken to repress the sect.

4. Results. By the end of the first century Christianity has taken deep root in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Rome, Egypt, and also, it would appear, in other parts of Africa. "It is probable that the new religion spread with marvelous rapidity from the beginning of Paul's preaching in Asia Minor. Unless that were so, it is hard to see how the social condition of Asia Minor during the second century could have been produced." (Prof. W. M. Ramsay, "The Church in the Roman Empire," page 146; see also Prof. Orr's "Some Neglected Factors in the Study of the Early Progress of Christianity.")

Study 2: The Rise of a New Brotherhood

Third Day: The Blending of Discrepant National Elements into a New Unity

1. No less remarkable than the rapidity of the growth of this brotherhood was the complexity of its national elements. It was at first recruited chiefly from Jews who were looking for the salvation of Israel (Acts 3:17-26). And nothing but the work of God in the hearts of the Gentiles could persuade them to offer the gospel to the uncircumcised (Gal. 2:8; cf. Acts 10:45-47; 11:17, 18). So exclusive was the Jew that the Roman government found it necessary to grant him special privileges wherever he settled, always recognizing him in Asia, or even in Alexandria as belonging to an alien body. He cherished passionately the conviction that his nation was a peculiar people, and held himself aloof from Gentile defilements, being indeed morally far superior, as was admitted by the numerous proselytes who from one end of the empire to the other associated with the Jewish worship, because of the pure monotheism and the high ethical teaching of the synagogue (Acts 10:28; 14:1; 17:4). What must it have meant for a Jewish Christian to call an uncircumcised Gentile his brother? (Gal. 2:3-5.) Must he not have regarded faith in Jesus Christ as of quite extraordinary value when he was willing to transfer the sacred title "Israel" to Gentiles, without pedigree, promises, and often even noble character? But Eph. 2:11-13 shows that the fusion was made.

2. There were also many Greeks in this brotherhood. The Greek was a man for whom the present world meant a very great deal. "Greece [at its best in classic days] first took up the task of fitting man with all that equips him for civil life and promotes his secular well-being; of unfolding and expanding every inborn faculty and energy, bodily and mental; of striving restlessly after the perfection of the whole, and finding in this effort after an unattainable ideal that by which a man becomes like unto the gods" (Butcher, "Aspects of Greek Genius," page 42). But the Greek had grown degenerate, much as he still professed "distinction" for his corrupt taste. In the realm of morals he had fallen very low. Cities like Antioch on the Orontes were brilliant but utterly sensual. Life had no seriousness. The pursuit of selfish pleasure, and a spirit of partisanship had turned the history of the Greeks into a record of lamentable failure. To the average Greek the gospel for a world of sin would be the height of folly (1 Cor. 1:21-24). But this gospel struck seriousness into many a frivolous Greek; it made him count the glory of the world as of little value (1 John 2:15-17), and created in him a loyalty to Christ and His Kingdom such as no earthly city, nor empire, nor philosophy, nor ideal of beauty had ever evoked (Gal. 3:28; read also Acts 17:16-34; 19:23-41).

Study 2: The Rise of a New Brotherhood

Fourth Day: A Citizenship Worthier than that of Rome

1. The Roman citizen. To be a Roman citizen was to be one of the lords of the world. We can hear even in Paul the ringing note of the dominant empire, which was an immense force binding the world together. It was on the whole a beneficent rule under which unity was conserved in the midst of diversity, and without restraint upon personal freedom. All the rights of the citizen were safeguarded, especially that of appeal to the emperor before being scourged or sentenced to death (Acts 22:28ff).

2. But the empire was essentially a deification of power. "Worship is the duty of the Roman *quâ* citizen. The administration of religion is a part of the civil administration; the *jus sacrum* is a part of the *jus civile*." Thus any and every religion was tolerated which did not conflict with the ideal of the state. But since the Roman religion was a matter more of public life than of private conviction, the state was intolerant of what appeared to be exclusive fanaticism.

3. This imperial spirit was supposed to be incarnate in the emperor, who, as head of the state, was given divine honor. Sacrifices were offered to his image as to a god. Here a direct and most distressing alternative faced the Christian. He was bound to refuse such idolatry of power, but in so doing he ceased to be a loyal citizen and renounced allegiance to the genius of the world-wide and, on the whole, beneficent empire of Rome. The unseen Kingdom of God and the supreme lordship of Jesus Christ must have appealed to him with overmastering power, before he would allow himself to become an alien to the empire of "the victorious West in crown and sword arrayed." The gospel of Jesus with its conditions of entrance into the kingdom (Matt. 5:3, 5) would arouse the scorn of the Roman world, confident in its "pride of life." But writing from Rome to a church in a proud colonial city Paul sets before them the glory of being burgesses in an eternal city-state (Phil. 3:20; 4:3).

4. The brethren were drawn from every nation, tribe and kindred. In the outer world the Roman despised the Greek, Greek hated Jew, Jew scorned both, and all regarded with contempt the crude pagan from the uplands of Asia Minor, devoted to the orgies of nature worship and fretted by civilization. But out of all these was fashioned an inner world, whose laws and ideals were based on mutual service and love to a common Lord. (See especially Col. 3:1-11.)

Study 2: The Rise of a New Brotherhood

Fifth Day: Recruited from Every Rank in Society

1. Moreover, every rank of society contributed its share to the membership of the new brotherhood. We may assume that the church of Corinth represents the average Pauline community, for it was in a most cosmopolitan city with a promiscuous population attracted thither by trade. A hint of its character is given in 1 Cor. 1:26. Though there may not have been many high-born nor influential Christians, it is improbable that the majority were drawn from the very poor or the slave class, the largest element belonging, it would appear, to the intelligent middle class engaged in the ordinary business concerns of life. Professor Ramsay thinks that the standard of intelligence and education would reach a high average. Other epistles pre-suppose similar conditions. James 2:2-8 shows a church with commingled elements of rich and poor. 1 Peter 2:18; Eph. 6:5ff. address readers many of whom were slaves.

2. But there are examples afforded in the New Testament of converts from among the well-to-do and even high-born classes. Colossæ had Philemon. At Corinth itself not only the city treasurer (Rom. 16:23), but other men of standing were leaders in the church (1 Cor. 16:15; 1:14, 15). For the church at Antioch see Acts 13:1; and one of the few at Athens was a member of the court of Areopagus (Acts 17:34). It is not unlikely that through the imprisonment of Paul (Phil. 1:13) the gospel reached royal circles, for Mommsen asserts that in the first century Christianity had no firmer hold anywhere than in the imperial court.

3. This is also borne out by the witness of the Catacombs. Many of the earliest were connected with the noblest families in Rome. The Acilii, *e. g.*, whose gardens and villa on the Pincian hill were almost royal in their magnificence, were probably Christians, for "a beautiful hypogæum of the second century in the very heart of Priscilla's cemetery containing the tombstone of Manius Acilius Verus and Acilia Priscilla, son and daughter of Manius Acilius Glabrio, consul A. D. 152, proves that the 'noblest among the noble' had embraced our faith from the first announcement of the gospel in Rome" (Lanciani, "Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome," page 422f.). Possibly Pamponia Græcina, wife of the conqueror of Britain, was a Christian, and it seems probable that Flavius Clemens, the consul, cousin of the Emperor Domitian, was put to death, and his wife, Domitilla, Domitian's niece, banished because they had espoused the faith. Surely there were few truer disciples or more obedient to the demands of the gospel than these (Mark 10:22, 25-31).

Study 2: The Rise of a New Brotherhood

Sixth Day: The Average Quality of the Early Church

1. We judge that the intelligence of churches to which such epistles as the Romans and Hebrews were written was of no mean order, so that the opinion of Schultze, supported as we have seen by Professor Ramsay, is entirely credible: "It was not the base elements which came into the Church; but on the contrary the better strata of the Roman population, the artificers, the shopkeepers, and small landed proprietors, therefore preponderatingly the under and middle portion of the citizen class who, in the general moral and religious dissolution of heathenism, still proved themselves the soundest classes of the community" (quoted by Orr, "Neglected Factors," page 112).

2. But there were also many who had been profligates. From what worse life could they have been rescued than that described in 1 Peter 4:2-4? Does not 1 Thess. 4:1-8 prove that the gospel had to deal with many who had very inferior moral standards? May we not infer from Rom. 6:18, 21 that some of the brethren in the capital had formerly given themselves over to the sensuality of "the sink of the world"?

3. The world in which Christianity appeared was chaotic. Fragments of disrupted nationalities were floating in its eddies; men were but chips on the stream. There was no spiritual cohesion of the parts, no real pity, no sympathy between class and class. No living, throbbing ideal of a unified humanity fascinated the conscience of that world. It is true that the Stoics had a doctrine of the brotherhood of man, but it remained on the whole a counsel of perfection for the wise man, and produced in the individual no glow of contagious enthusiasm. In practice the fine theories of the manhood of the slave, and the freedom of man as man came to nought. Indeed the Stoic was often a hard Pharisee. Notwithstanding the religious warmth of Epictetus and the moral earnestness of Marcus Aurelius, and in spite of the ethical tone of Stoicism as it passed into practice under the Romans, it remained a philosophy. More than cold reason was needed to reach the springs of action. Whence came it that the debauchee learned purity, the slave became a man, Jew greeted Gentile, and the high born received the poor into his palace as a brother? Whence had the fellowship of love binding all into one its source? Surely from a spring which the heavens bowed themselves and came down to feed. (Read 1 John 4:7-16.)

Study 2: The Rise of a New Brotherhood

Seventh Day: The King of Love and His City

1. "Christianity abhors isolation." Love is its essence, for love is greater than faith and hope (1 Cor. 13). But love comes from God who is its primal fountain, and only through love can we get to know Him. The Father Himself is invisible, and the proof that we possess His nature is the indwelling in us of His Spirit, impelling us to love our brethren. Love is the antithesis of selfishness (1 John 4:12-14). Such love of the brethren was a new phenomenon in the world because its motive is found in the redemptive love of God's Son (John 13: 34, 35).

2. The brotherhood was not merely a new ethical society whose members practised love to one another. True it was that they only could confess that Jesus is the Son of God who did His commands. But these commands were given by one who had died to save them from their sins (1 Peter 1:13-19). In the sight of His cross the worldly ambitions and social distinctions passed away (Gal. 6:14). He Himself who first loved them became the Person who welded them together, and only in the company of His disciples, who loved one another because they loved Him, was the truth of His life preserved (John 15: 8-14).

3. "The city of God, of which the Stoics doubtfully and feebly spoke, was now set up before the eyes of men. It was no unsubstantial city such as we fancy in the clouds, no invisible pattern such as Plato thought might be laid up in heaven, but a visible corporation. . . . . Here the Gentile met the Jew whom he had been accustomed to regard as the enemy of the human race; the Roman met the lying Greek sophist, the Syrian slave the gladiator born beside the Danube. In brotherhood they met, the natural birth and kindred of each forgotten, the baptism alone remembered in which they had been born again to God and to each other." ("Ecce Homo," page 128.)

Study 3: A Fellowship of Love to Christ

First Day: Baptism and the Lord's Supper Symbols of a Common Life

1. This brotherhood consisted of societies scattered over the world. But they were all closely bound together into one community by ties of spiritual kinship (1 Peter 5:9). Individual congregations formed part of the one great Church of God (1 Cor 1:2; Gal. 1:13). This unity found expression in common sacraments, common meals, fellowship, and a well-ordered system of relief for such of the brethren as might be in need.

2. Baptism. Each member was initiated into the Christian community by undergoing the rite of baptism, in which he made public confession of Jesus as his Lord and the Son of God (Acts 10:48; cf. 1 John 4:15). They were all baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). What was signified thereby? (Rom. 6:4; 1 Peter 3:21). They were dead to their old life of sin and had begun a new life in fellowship with the risen Christ. Further, a new spirit was given them (Acts 2:38; 11: 16), which became a pledge of final salvation (2 Cor. 1:21, 22; Eph. 1:13, 14). But its chief significance was the open acknowledgment of devotion to a common Head, whose Person was described by His name, the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:10-15; Phil. 2:9, 10), and in whom all believers formed one body (1 Cor. 12:12, 13). Baptism was thus a striking symbol of unity (Eph. 4:3-5).

3. The common meal. Equally symbolic of unity was the common table round which the brethren gathered probably every day. In later years the love-feast was separated from the Lord's Supper, but it seems that in the early Church the daily evening meal was consecrated in memory of their Lord, and at the same time afforded the fullest fellowship between rich and poor, the brethren being one in love to Christ (1 Cor. 10:16, 17). Very instructive for the value of this sacrament to that church is the severe rebuke which Paul administers in 1 Cor. 11: 17-34. The conduct of the Corinthians was not only sacrilege, but a negation of Christian fellowship.

Study 3: A Fellowship of Love to Christ

Second Day: Fellowship, Hospitality, Correspondence

1. Fellowship. This word occurs frequently in the New Testament to cover all that may be included in an intercourse touching every phase of social and religious life. In the early chapters of Acts we have the Christian ideal of fellowship, which is no communism expressed in doctrinaire regulations, but springs from a love both willing to share with and receive from others (Acts 2:44-47; 4:34-37). Paul gave his readers special instructions to care for the poor (1 Cor. 13:3; Gal. 2:10). The third gospel also seems to emphasize the sympathy of Jesus for the poor (Luke 19:8) whose example would be closely followed by the brethren. This fellowship, however, meant more than relief of want. It was a gift of the Holy Spirit inducing brotherly kindness (1 John 4:7, 8, 11; Heb. 13:16), the joy of intercourse between kindred minds in spiritual concerns (Gal. 2:9), or a common interest in the welfare of the Kingdom of God (Phil. 1:3-5). It bound all Christians together in a way that social needs or physical wants could never have done. But this fellowship was not only local, it embraced, as we shall see, the Church of God in all lands.

2. Hospitality. Those were days of much traveling. Under the protection of the Roman government the fine highways were thronged by commercial men, officials, students attending the universities, traveling physicians, lecturers. The crowds were in fact as motley as in our Western world. As the century grew many Christians would mingle in the throng—some on business or pleasure, many in haste to spread the message of the kingdom. For Aquila and Priscilla's journeys see 1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:3; Acts 18:2, 26. Other glimpses of the great movement to and fro among the churches are afforded by the salutations with which Paul's letters so often close, and the greetings in other epistles (Rom. 16; Phil. 4: 21, 22; Heb. 13:2, 24). Hospitality was in that hostile world a fine Christian grace, the missionaries especially being as a rule gladly welcomed (3 John 5-10).

3. Correspondence. Missionaries or messengers often brought letters from the apostles or from church to church (Phil. 2:19, 25), which were read in gatherings of the brethren, and served to weld together the sundered parts of the Christian body (2 Cor. 3:1; Col. 4:16).

Thus the bond uniting these brethren was not the system of a school of thought, nor any external organization, but the common fellowship of a large family, a household of faith, with its earthly sign-manual in common love, common hopes, and mutual help (Gal. 6:10; 1 Peter 2:9, 10).

Study 3: A Fellowship of Love to Christ

Third Day: The New Testament Passion for Unity

1. No reader of the Pauline epistles can fail to detect the anxiety with which the apostle resists any disintegrating forces among the churches. This it is which gives its passion to the epistle to the Galatians (1:6, 7; 2:2, 5), and which causes Second Corinthians to throb vehemently. Paul's fear is lest the unity of Christendom should be shattered. If Jewish and Gentile Christianity stood disrupted, like the riven, clashing rocks of legend barring entrance to the Friendly Sea, the gospel would be in a hopeless case. Unity goes down deep (Gal. 3:28); hatred of schism is intense (1 Cor. 1:10-13). In his later years the sounds of the conflict between Jewish and Gentile Christians die away, and the apostle breaks into serene eloquence as he contemplates the marvelous glory of the one and invisible Church of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:14-17; 4:1-6), of which the local churches of the empire united in common service of the gospel are, in spite of all their blemishes, the visible embodiment (4:12, 13; 5:27).

2. But Paul was not content with this ideal of unity. He gave it expression in the well-organized system of contributions from the churches of the provinces in behalf of their poor brethren in the mother church at Jerusalem. He lays great stress on this as a practical proof of Christian fellowship (Rom. 15:26), whereby he hoped to heal the breach between the two sections; for if the Jew received help from his Gentile brother he could not avoid cherishing for him a more friendly regard. In order to render this community of love more impressive he has a deputation of representatives from each circle sent with the money, and he himself is their leader (2 Cor. 8:1-4, 23, 24; 9:1-4, 6, 7, 12, 14). By personal intercourse he hoped to disarm prejudice and unify all sections in a common sympathy. Those will most appreciate the success of his undertaking who understand the national antagonisms of those times.

3. Though Paul's conditions brought him into prominence as a champion in securing a unified Christendom, other books of the New Testament place no less importance on the cultivation of unity (Heb. 6:10; 1 Peter 3:8; 4:8), while the conviction of the oneness of the brethren culminates in the Johannine writings (1 John 3:14; 4:7), being the dominant theme of the Intercessory Prayer (John 17:11, 21, 23, 26).

Study 3: A Fellowship of Love to Christ

Fourth Day; Brothers in a New Family: Disciples

1. The members of the "Household of Faith" were "brothers." Their head was Jesus Christ, now absent from them in the body, but present in their midst by His Spirit (Heb. 2:11; 3:6; Matt. 28:20). Orphans in an evil world these brethren drew together seeking to obey the commands of their unseen Lord by living in love with one another (John 14:15-18; 15:18, 19). They are brothers by reason of a higher kinship than that of blood, their Master having warned his followers that they might have to sacrifice earthly relationships in order to gain higher privileges, for fellowship in the circle of those early brethren brought a keenness of joy that few if any had ever experienced in earthly homes (Matt. 12:49, 50; Mark 10:28-31).

2. In accordance with this Christianity was a house religion. The gatherings of the brethren were held in the homes of the wealthier members, who probably not only gave the use of their rooms but supplied meals for the poorer among them and the slaves (1 Cor. 16:15; Col. 4:15; Philem. 2). Under cover of night they would come to their love-feast—a slave perchance snatching an hour from his harsh owner, or a whilom Jewish family rich in spiritual inheritance but poor in this world's goods, even a Roman centurion, grave but contented in aspect, accompanied by a soldier of his band. To-night perhaps they come with eager interest, for yonder sits a man small of stature but keen of eye, though furrowed, and he bears the marks of hardship and is branded even on his face with wounds. Paul it is who presides at the feast. Trouble and the world are left outside. The door swings in on a court of peace. Each was supposed to share his brother's burdens (Gal. 6:2; James 5:16, 19, 20). But was it always so? In 1 Cor. 6:1-8; James 4:1-4 we discover that dashes of dark color would often tone the idyllic brightness of the picture.

3. Another common term in the Gospels and Acts for those who believed in Jesus is "Disciple" (Acts 6:1; 9:38; 11:26; 21:16). This suggests the time when Jesus was in Galilee and called upon men to follow Him. It seems to have been a commoner title among the Jewish Christians, some of whom were His personal disciples, than among Gentiles, to whom He had first been made known as the risen Lord. Yet all were in a sense disciples of Jesus, for He was the living Lord of every Christian, and the old commandment, "follow me," was new with each generation of believers who sought "to walk even as He walked" (1 John 2:6-8; 1 Peter 2:21).

Study 3: A Fellowship of Love to Christ

Fifth Day: Saint, Slave, Christian.

1. "Saint" is one of the most usual designations for the brethren, especially in the Pauline epistles, Hebrews and Revelation (Rom. 1:7; Heb. 3:1). Separated from a sinful world they are consecrated to the service of God. Why are they also called "the elect"? (Col. 3:12; 1 Peter 1:1.) Individually united to Christ they felt that they owed everything to God's grace (Gal. 1:15), and had been chosen by Him out of the world to serve Him (1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:4). As saints they have received the Holy Spirit which seals them as belonging to another world (1 Peter 1:2; Eph. 1:13, 14; 1 John 2:27; 4:13).

2. "Slave." This most opprobrious of epithets becomes, when interpreted in the light of Christ's redemptive love, a favorite term for the Christian's devotion to the Lord who owns him absolutely. For the full figure see 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. Was this slavery galling? An answer is given in Gal. 5:13; 6:17. The will of God is no yoke (Heb. 13:20, 21).

3. "Christian." This title was really, when accepted, a confession of Jesus as the Messiah. From Phil. 2:11; Heb. 3:1; Matt. 16:16, 18 we seem to be justified in inferring that every candidate for baptism was required to make public acknowledgment that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God; and this practice, which dated probably from the beginning of the preaching of the gospel (Acts 2:38), may have given rise to this name for the brethren. We need not concern ourselves with the time and place of its origin, though the incident in Acts 11:26 bears the stamp of verisimilitude. The name occurs only twice elsewhere in the New Testament (Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16), but in a short time it dispossessed all others, and was current in Rome probably by 64 A. D. At the beginning of the second century it was accepted by believers as their fit and proper designation. Ignatius, the date of whose death may be put down at 117 A. D., says, "that I may not only be called a Christian but also be found one" (Rom. 3). The Christian was really "the Christ's man."

4. These terms show that the Christian community not only enjoyed a common life, but that Jesus Christ was the heart and soul of their fellowship. Nothing was too dear to yield to Him. His sword cut sharp and deep, as it does still, separating between father and son, mother and daughter, though the excluded ones soon found in the company of the faithful greater love than they had ever known; often they had to take a road that led out to death, for on it they saw the footsteps of their Master (Matt. 10:34-39). There was one Name that acted as a spell upon these brethren (Acts 5:41; Phil. 2:10; 3 John 7), while it roused Jew and Gentile to passionate hatred.

Study 3: A Fellowship of Love to Christ

Sixth Day: The Body of Christ, the Church, the New Israel

1. There were in that brotherhood two complementary tendencies, altruism and individualism, which when separated have often done harm. The Christian was not a hermit seeking to save his own soul apart from his fellows, nor was he an insignificant atom lost in the fellowship at large. He was a brother among brethren, a saint among the elect, a subject in the kingdom, a member of the body of Christ, a citizen of the true Israel (1 Peter 2:4-10).

2. Several terms were applied to the whole fellowship of believers. Of these Paul often uses "the Body of Christ." (See especially 1 Cor. 12:12ff.; cf. Eph. 4:11-16.) Christ is the Head from whom life pervades the organism, the well-being of the whole depending on the well-being even of the smallest part. Thus the Christian churches were not loosely articulated societies, but spiritual organisms united in common life from the living Christ.

3. This ideal body is often called "the Church." It was no abstract term, but was partially realized all over the Roman Empire in communities, whose members were supplied by the Holy Spirit with gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-11; 1 Peter 4:10). Does the New Testament put the primary emphasis on the redemption of the Church as a whole, or the individual? How is the individual related to the body? (Matt. 16:16-19; 18:15-17; Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11-13; 5:25-27.)

4. This new creation did not rise upon the world unheralded and unrelated to the past. There has been only one house which God has been building through the ages. Long ago were the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets, who ministered in more primitive and lesser rooms while the national Israel was God's chosen people (Heb. 1:1; 3:1-6). Earthly Israel, however, proved unfaithful; it rejected its Messiah (John 1:11-13); wherefore God hath rejected the nation as such (Luke 20:9-19); but a holy kernel survives, those who accepted Jesus as Messiah, and has now been served heir to the promises. The brotherhood becomes "the new Israel," the true house of God. The faithful Gentile is the real Son of Abraham, the true Israelite, most glorious of names to a Jew (Gal. 3:7; 6:16; 1 Peter 2:9, 10). Of what magnitude and order must those brethren have conceived Christ to be, when He entered like a new planet into their world system, and could compel the Jew out of his old national orbit into the sweep of spiritual powers in a new realm?

Study 3: A Fellowship of Love to Christ

Seventh Day: The Kingdom of the Son of His Love

1. The Kingdom of God. Though this term occurs seldom in the epistles, it is probably the most comprehensive idea in Christ's teaching, and brings out the fullness of the life of the Church particularly well. Its rare occurrence in the epistles was due partly to the unfamiliarity of the Greeks with the Jewish conception of the theocracy, and partly to the fact that their earlier national life and political ideals, selfish and partisan as they were, supplied no impressive framework for the sphere of the divine sovereignty. To the original disciples the term would mean more, for not only were they Jews, but they had heard Jesus preach the gospel of the kingdom in Galilee.

2. The term as it was used by the Christians of the epistles was no ideal of resurgent national hopes, nor a kingdom of this world, such as Gentiles would belong to, in which emperors and their subordinates sought to aggrandize themselves rather than to serve the people. It was the Kingdom of God because it signified God's rule. Wherever He holds sway there is the kingdom, whether it be in the heart of the individual in whom His Spirit is working out His will (Rom. 14:17), or in the multitude of subjects who live a common life under the laws of that kingdom. Its true sphere is in the unseen world lying beyond the present, but it has come to earth and is being wrought out in the hearts of men. Christ who has been entrusted with the establishment of that kingdom is proving Himself Lord by the victory He is gaining in the hearts of men (1 Cor. 15:24, 25; Col. 1:13), and that victory will be complete. But the final glory of the kingdom will only be manifest when the present shall have given way to a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1f.; Heb. 12:28). Then shall each be perfect in all, the whole kingdom being a community of the perfect forming one complete humanity in Christ Jesus (Eph. 4:13).

3. All the designations of this brotherhood, whether individual or corporate, thus draw their significance from Jesus Christ, with whom each and all were linked in "an enthusiasm of loyalty and devotion." Across the Roman Empire were strung invisible chords of love and faith binding the several churches together, and as the experience of their life, joyful or grievous, swept through them, it turned into a melody of adoration to Jesus as Lord.

Study 4: The Hope of the Brotherhood

First Day: A Reversal of Values

1. A ruling conviction of the brotherhood was that the unseen world is of overwhelming importance as compared with the present. It is the world of realities; this world is a world of shadows, and with its ambitions and false desires is passing away (Heb. 2:5; 11:3; 2 Cor. 5:1; 1 John 2:17). Though believers live on earth, their true citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 Thess. 2:12), and that glorious inheritance is being kept for them, as they also are being guarded for it in the midst of the temptations and sufferings of the present (1 Peter 1:4, 5).

2. In view of this transcendent world to which the believer is heir, his present distress may well be endured (Rom. 8:18ff.) until he reaches the new Jerusalem whose glory even now rises above the shock of conflict (Rev. 21:1f). There was among these brethren a heroic indifference to the worst that the world could do. What though they are plundered of their goods? (Heb. 10:34.) Are they the sport of men and of angels, the refuse of the world? (1 Cor. 4:9, 11-13.) Nothing can shake their bold confidence in God, for their future is assured (Rom. 8:18). Indeed, trial is a joy, affliction a purifying fire (James 1:2; 1 Peter 1:6, 7). Tossed though they are on a sea of troubles in this present world they cannot drift, for their hope, an anchor that will not snap, is plunged into the unseen depths and holds them firm to irremovable realities (Heb. 6:19, 20). This faith had been verified by the presence in their midst of the powers of the world to come (Heb. 6:5).

3. Their triumph over death was a proof of the intensity of their hope. The popular mind was enslaved by terror of death, but Jew or Gentile, philosopher or unlearned, when he had once discovered eternal life in Jesus Christ, cast from him his fear and faced the unseen with joy (Heb. 2:14, 15; 1 Cor. 15:55; 1 John 4:17, 18). Death is drowned in an ocean of life (2 Cor. 5:4), for the individual will exchange his present mortality for a glorious tenement which is awaiting him even now in heaven (2 Cor. 5:1, 2).

Study 4: The Hope of the Brotherhood

Second Day: The Risen Christ the Heart of Their Hope

1. The simple reason of this joy in facing the future was that the unknown had been made known to them. To die was to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23). Jesus stands over the dying, stilling him to sleep as a mother her child, and he awakes in the light of eternal day (1 Thess. 4:14). The average Christian, unlike his Master, had no Gethsemane, and no agony such as his sinless Lord endured on the cross.

2. Their victory over death and their hopes spring from faith in the risen and living Christ (1 Peter 1:3; Heb. 2:5-9; 1 Cor. 15:12-19). He is the Prince of life at the right hand of God (Acts 3:15). Though absent in heaven His presence is imminent over this world, and we may take Rev. 1:13-18 as a description of the way in which some of the Christians would picture their Lord enthroned in majesty. But an even more beautiful figure is that of the Lamb who will shepherd the souls of men in eternal life (Rev. 7:17).

3. Christ will be forever the central glory of the future realm, for as the believer is even now complete in Him (Col. 2:10), he is also called to the eternal glory of God in Christ Jesus (1 Peter 5:10), and the vision of the Christ shall transform the believer into His likeness (1 John 3:2). Christ will always be the Saviour and Redeemer (Rev. 5:12, 13). The Son will introduce His many brethren, who in obedience follow Him, into the presence of God (Heb. 2:10, 11). Ranged round Jesus Christ believers will through Him attain unto perfect sonship (Rom. 8:29).

Study 4: The Hope of the Brotherhood

Third Day: The Fullness of Life in the Glorious Company of the Saints

1. The coming kingdom is not a realm like the present, for flesh and blood shall not inherit it (1 Cor. 15:50). There shall be a new body suited to the spiritual sphere, like unto the glorious body of the risen Christ (1 Cor. 15:23, 44, 49). No human tongue can describe the grandeur of that future (1 Cor. 2:6-9). Indeed this salvation engaged the attention of inspired men of old (1 Peter 1:10-12), and at present the believer has only a foretaste of the final salvation (Eph. 1:14).

2. But in that future, the new Canaan, the Rest of God (Heb. 4:9; 12:22), believers shall be pure and spotless, each possessing his own unique salvation (Jude 24). Will there be growth in that world? It seems to be implied in Matt. 5:48; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:13; 1 John 3:2.

3. Each will be perfect in all. Just as on earth no disciple could cherish the true life apart from fellowship with his brethren (1 John 4:12, 20, 21), so in the heavenly city the glory of believers is an inheritance among the saints. It will be fullness of life because there will be perfect fellowship of love between Father, Son and brethren (Heb. 12:22-24; 1 John 1:3, 4; Eph. 1:18). The eternal Church of God will be a magnificent unity composed of infinite variety, each perfect life of the organism flashing forth like a facet its ray of light, as a share of the glorious radiance streaming from the whole Body of Christ to illuminate all worlds in the oncoming ages, with a knowledge of the marvelous riches of the wisdom of God (Eph. 2:7; 3:10; 4:13-16). Moreover, this glory will emancipate all creation, which is straining its eye for the advent of the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8:19).

3. In the gospels also we find the same hope for the future, though many of the aspects of the kingdom which they contain are concerned with its progress in the present world. However, the present is lived under the light of the future, and it is difficult to say whether Jesus lays more stress on one than on the other. The blessedness of the coming kingdom is pictured as a banquet at which there will be a goodly fellowship of patriarchs and prophets (Luke 13:28; 14:15; 22:18, 30). Similar conceptions appear in the fourth gospel, where (14—16) the believer is promised perfect communion with his Lord in an eternal heavenly home.

Study 4: The Hope of the Brotherhood

Fourth Day: The Return of Jesus

1. Though Jesus is now in heaven He will return to consummate His kingdom surrounded with all the majesty of a royal progress (1 Thess. 4:16; Matt. 26:64). Various terms occur in the New Testament to describe this personal return of Jesus. One of these, "Apocalypse," or "Revelation" (2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:7; 1 Peter 1:7, 13; 4:13), suggests the thought that Jesus, though hidden from view, stands ready to appear at any moment, whenever the curtains are drawn aside which now hide that world of realities from mortal gaze. A similar term, "Appearing," is a favorite in the pastoral epistles (1 Tim. 6:14; Titus 2:13). But the most familiar is "Parousia," "Presence," or "Coming" (1 Cor. 15: 23; James 5: 7; 1 John 2:28). This last word seems to have been in general employment.

2. The present was thought to be the scene of a mighty conflict, though the result is not doubtful, for Jesus must put all His enemies under His feet. In every movement of nature, every convulsion of the wicked world they beheld a death throe of the defeated adversary (2 Thess. 2:7, 8; Rev. 20:1-3). Meantime on earth the followers of Jesus are helping Him in His struggle (Col. 1:24), for they are fellow-laborers with Him while He stands "within the shadow, keeping watch above His own."

3. There can be no doubt that the writers of the New Testament believed not only that the battle between Christ and His adversary was already won in principle, because he had been smitten to the death (1 Peter 3:22; Col. 2:15), but also that this spiritual fact would soon become manifest to the world. Jesus would ere long return in glory to this earth to judge the living and the dead and to bring His kingdom to its consummation. This cosmic event was expected to happen in the first generation of believers, for such seems to be the only reasonable interpretation of passages like 1 Thess. 4:15; 1 Cor. 15:51; Rom. 13:12; Heb. 10:37; James 5:7; 1 Peter 4:7; 1 John 2:18; Rev. 22:20.

Study 4: The Hope of the Brotherhood

Fifth Day: Phases of Belief in the Return of Jesus

1. There seems to have been a gradual development in the conception of the Church of the first century as to the return of Jesus. At first, while the brethren were a sect of Judaism, they had no thought of carrying the gospel to the wider Gentile world, but hoped that their people would repent and prove themselves to be the true Israel (Acts 3:19-21). Not till then would the Lord return to dwell on earth among a holy people. But experience soon proved that Israel according to the flesh would not repent, and that even as they had put Messiah to death they would also persecute His growing kingdom (Acts 7:51-53).

2. Then came the expansion of the Church to the Gentile world, opening up a vista of wide conquests to be made for the risen Christ. So the Church threw herself with vigor into the thick of the heathen powers in league with the world-god. Christ was with her. His Spirit was going before her so evidently that she thought less than formerly of His personal return to the earth. The missionaries were doing His bidding in carrying this gospel to the world (Mark 13:10), at first probably without any active resistance on the part of the governments. But the promise of the return was never forgotten.

3. Then persecution broke. Rome as well as Jerusalem became hostile, and the awful hatred of the world for the Kingdom of God was revealed. How can the victorious Son brook such evil so long? was the question on many a lip. Maran-atha, a cry for relief, was the prayer of many a heart. But it is probable that as persecution waxed or waned it brought into distinctness or allowed to grow dim for a time this conviction of His return, which was always on the horizon-line of the life of that early Church.

4. With the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D., the danger to the Church from the Jew diminished, but the Roman Empire became a worse foe (see Revelation). By the end of the century Antichrist is not a national but a spiritual power—those who deny that Jesus is the true Son of God (1 John 2:18; 4:1-3). So violent has the denial grown that the time is ripe for destruction. Finally, it is to be observed that the fourth gospel enlarges upon the return of Jesus in the Paraclete, while the thought of the immediate personal appearing has become less central.

Study 4: The Hope of the Brotherhood

Sixth Day: A Misinterpretation and Its Blessing

1. Notwithstanding their strong hopes for the return of Jesus that early Church was disappointed, and no small danger of unbelief accompanied the disappointment (1 Thess. 4:13-18; Heb. 10:36-39; 2 Peter 3:4). How then did they come to entertain the conviction?

2. One of the largest ideas of Old Testament prophecy was that of the Day of the Lord, when Jehovah would appear in majesty to judge His people, sifting out the faithful remnant, destroying rebellious Israel, and establishing His reign in righteousness (Mal. 3:2ff.; Isa. 11:4ff., 13). This Day was always thought of as near, and was regarded as the one event by which the kingdom would be consummated.

3. Now the disciples were Jews, and were accustomed to think of this Day of the Lord as the one swift crisis, when the Kingdom of God which Jesus preached would be manifested to their own generation in all its glory. They were merely doing what every prophet had done before them. With their literal ideas of the kingdom not altogether purged away, they interpreted Christ's sayings as to His return (Mark 13:24-27) as a single event near at hand. They misunderstood His prediction as to His resurrection also (Mark 9:31), and we cannot be surprised that they were equally sluggish with regard to His other sayings on the future (Mark 13:32; Acts 1:6, 7). Living in the small valley of their Jewish national life the early Christians only saw the sun striking through and illuminating their own hillsides. But Jesus was to be the Saviour of the world, and His Spirit illumining them dispelled the clouds, when the disciples found that He was to come and bathe far distant plains and islands of the sea in His light. We know that the Day of the Lord is stretching over centuries.

4. And yet this misinterpretation, or preferably this necessary limitation of their understanding of their Master, served in the providence of God a good purpose. Those Christians felt assured of victory provided they could scale the heights immediately in front of them. Never has confidence in the power of Christ been more needed than during the awful experience of that untried Church. They believed that He was with them and that the struggle would not be long. So they faced the terrible odds and won. That was all they were asked to do. As far as they were concerned it was the end of their world, and undoubtedly the Day of the Lord had begun when Jerusalem fell in 70 A. D. But if they had known that other generations would have to face other antichrists, the early believers might have grown faint-hearted at the prospect of distant years, and not have carried the gospel so eagerly to the world. Their limited knowledge thus became a blessing to us who have entered into their labors.

Study 4: The Hope of the Brotherhood

Seventh Day: The Permanent Truth of the Christian's Hope

1. The effect of the expectation of the speedy return of Jesus upon the life of the primitive believers has often been exaggerated. Though in some quarters this hope led to undue enthusiasm under the influence of which men began to abandon their daily pursuits, this was sporadic (2 Thess. 2:2; 3:10, 11), and there was on the whole a wonderful moral balance in that early Church. Such a belief must have somewhat affected the conditions of society and its ideals, but no more permanent condition of uncertainty was introduced for the individual than faces every man now in the fact of the unknown day of his death. And society itself was regenerated just by the men who cherished these hopes. They did not disregard their present duties, nor become ascetics. On the contrary they wrought into practice the most perfect and sane code of morals for a life under ordinary conditions in this world that has ever been known. The reason was that equally important with the promise of Christ's return, if indeed it was not more so, was His command to obey Him (John 14:15-21), and the shortness of life did not prevent its being a field of discipline for character.

2. But in truth the time element was not the most important part of their hope. The Christians knew that they had actually been transferred out of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of God's love (Col. 1:13). Already they were in the enjoyment of the Holy Spirit which was to them an overwhelming proof of the value and reality of the other world (1 Peter 1:12; Eph. 1:13, 14; Heb. 6:4, 5; 1 John 4:13). Their spiritual experience was as real a proof to them of the existence of the heavenly city as their sense experience was of the reality of the present seen world (Heb. 11:1-3). That real world was separated from the present by a mere handbreadth, and the curtain must soon rise and disclose its glory. This remains the permanent truth of our hope also. The present earthly scene is of short duration. Even here we have eternal life, but flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.

3. So the judgments of men were reversed. Paul gives the Christian view in 1 Cor. 2:6-16; 2 Cor. 4:4. These brethren did not appraise their worldly goods at small value because they were of short tenure, but because they had the mind of Christ and knew that they were inherently of little worth. They wished to save their life (Mark 8:34-38), and their treasure and heart were both secure beyond the vicissitudes of the present (Matt. 6:19-21). It was not only a few philosophic minds who enjoyed such serene confidence. Buoyancy pervaded the brotherhood. Why did they place such enormous value on the unseen world? Whence came this matchless hope, this faith that subdued an empire?

Study 5: The Sense of Power in the Brotherhood

First Day: Miraculous Powers Accompany and Flow from the Preaching of the Gospel

1. The conviction of the brotherhood that supernatural power was in their midst may be illustrated from nearly every writing of the New Testament. It broke forth upon them at baptism as the gift of the Holy Spirit, which was a confirmation to them by God Himself that the gospel was the truth (Heb. 2:3, 4). Here and now they enjoy the powers of the coming Messianic age. They are an essential part of their life of faith whereby they have a vivid experience of the real world beyond (Heb. 6:5). Paul also had large evidence of similar effects accompanying his preaching (1 Thess. 1:5; Gal. 3:5). Indeed the same extraordinary display of energy welled forth from every group of believers from Jerusalem to Illyricum, the farthest point the apostle had reached before writing the letter to the Romans (Rom. 15:18-20).

2. The ordinary terms employed are "powers," "marvels," "signs." The first describes the event as a display of divine energy (Acts 3:12; 4:7; Eph. 3:7, 16) working through the individual Christian as an instrument. The word "marvel" or "wonder" brings out the effect of astonishment with which the miracle strikes the beholder (2 Cor. 12:12), while "sign" refers to it as a deed of divine origin. The miracle is not a dead, unrelated fact, but an action with a meaning (1 Cor. 14:22).

3. Every member of the Corinthian Church, it would appear, was endowed with some spiritual gift. Different as these gifts were they all came from God, who granted each a manifestation of the same spirit for the common good (1 Cor. 12:4-11). They were not only such as might be used for edification in their common gatherings—prophecy, faith, "tongues," interpretation of this strange speech, ability to discriminate prophetic utterance, but there were works of healing and miraculous powers. The ordinary Corinthian had a wrong scale of values. Greek as he was he regarded enthusiasm as a token of the indwelling God, and went to excess in the use of the gift of tongues, which often degenerated into frenzied ejaculations, unintelligible to the congregation. Paul discountenances this misuse of a real spiritual power (1 Cor. 14:1-25). All gifts were to be employed in the service of the brotherhood (1 Peter 4:10, 11). This is a fundamental law of the kingdom.

Study 5. The Sense of Power in the Brotherhood

Second Day: A Constant Belief Throughout the New Testament

1. A further illustration of the way in which the Church of the latter half of the first century believed that the Spirit of God had been manifested within it, is afforded by the Book of Acts. This treatise is written under the conviction that a personal Spirit of power coming from the risen Jesus guided the fortunes of the brethren (Acts 1:8). The Church is born at Pentecost by an act of power (Acts 2:1-4). Ananias and Sapphira, whose treason would wreck the mutual confidence of the brethren, are visited by sudden death (5:1-11). Not only do gifts of healing appear in their midst, but the demons are driven out and the dead raised (Acts 3:1f.; 5:12; 9:36-43; 20:7-10). They believed, too, that Jesus Himself had given them this power (Luke 10:19, 20).

2. The miraculous element in the life of the early Church is also illuminated by Mark 16:9-20. As they stand the verses are not part of this original gospel, but they may be used for our present purpose, which is to show the conviction of the brotherhood during the first century. (See especially 17, 18, most of which may be paralleled from Acts.) The miraculous endowment was threefold: (1) For edification of the brethren; (2) healing diseases and averting deadly results; (3) driving out demons. Further, the passage, like Acts and Luke, connects this miraculous power with Jesus Christ. It is an accompaniment of the introduction into the world of the Kingdom of God which He preached.

3. Thus throughout the New Testament there is an unbroken conviction to the effect that that period was exceptional, and that the believers had been invested by Jesus with new powers, His Spirit working in them to this effect. It is impossible to deny that there were in those early years such manifestations (see First Day). Were they tokens of the Divine presence as the Christians themselves believed? To deny their interpretation is not merely to say that they were mistaken as to some events of their life, but to hold that their whole world-view was incorrect. Miracles were to them as much a sign of the presence of God's Spirit as was their new life. Indeed they were inseparable, for the new life was a miraculous creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

Study 5: The Sense of Power in the Brotherhood

Third Day: The Conquering Gospel

1. We must not overestimate these outward miraculous signs as though they were regarded by the writers of the New Testament as the supreme proof of supernatural power. Far from it; their life as a whole was the display of power. It was a mighty stream sweeping everything before it. The inherent dynamic of the gospel is seen in the aggressiveness of its first preachers. A handful of men, reckless of their lives, endeavor to take by assault first the Jewish nation and then the Roman world; and that in spite of the conviction that the present age had only a few years to run. Nor did they regard Rome or Judaism as tottering through internal decay. That world was not senile. Palestine was far more prosperous than it is to-day. Antioch, Tarsus, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome were centers of enormous wealth and fine culture. The audacity of these missionaries was only matched by their success.

2. The leaders of this activity were the apostles, who held their primacy not only because they had fuller knowledge, but also by reason of their power in spreading the gospel (1 Cor. 9:2; 2 Cor. 3:2; 12:12). Theirs was no mere official rank. None equalled the greatest of the apostles in the extent to which they laid the foundations of the gospel.

3. Consider the confidence of this Paul. Of a race despised by Roman and Greek, hated by his fellow Jews, he is not ashamed to face Rome with the gospel (Rom. 1:15, 16), though it had been the scorn of the wise Greek, for he knows that many will be gripped by this power of God unto salvation. Nor does he leave us in any doubt as to the source of his superhuman energy. As a man of the world he is held in slight esteem, so much so indeed that on his arrival in Galatia, a stranger, all but done to death, branded with slavery scars of Christ, his plight almost revolted those who saw him (Gal. 4:13, 14; 6:17). Before and since he has been the plaything of every fortune. Again and again in some strait when he asked himself whether this was death at last his heart would answer, Yes! (2 Cor. 1:9). His body is wearing thin because of his hardships, but through the veil of his flesh is seen the image of the new man created in Christ (2 Cor. 4:7-18; 11:16-33; 12:9, 10). The power of the living Christ is almost incandescent in this vessel of clay.

Study 5: The Sense of Power in the Brotherhood

Fourth Day: In Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power

1. If the apostles held forth the word of power like bright lights far off on inhospitable capes or islands on the ocean of heathenism, there were multitudes of lesser men flashing out the truth along the shores. Indeed it is impossible to estimate the power of the unknown missionary. How often was the planting of churches done by obscure believers (Acts 8:4, 5; 11:19-21). The church to which Hebrews was written had been evangelized by unknown persons (Heb. 2:3); that of Rome—the imperial city—owed its origin to no apostle; so also the church of Colossæ (Col. 1:4).

2. The life of that church showed itself in its missionary zeal. Within their borders such a powerful fountain of living water had suddenly burst forth that it streamed down upon the world in every direction. And fruits of the Spirit grew luxuriantly along the water courses from the soil that had hitherto been quite barren. This active propaganda of the faith is as evident at the end of the century in Johannine circles as at the beginning (3 John 7, 8). They expected the hatred of the world indeed (1 John 3:13), but when Rome has shown her teeth a Jew dares to defy her in the words of Rev. 18:16, 17, 20. Daunted at nothing they found their chief joy in the spread of the gospel (2 Thess. 3:1; Phil. 1:12-20).

3. In Ephesus, Athens and Corinth Paul was first regarded as one of a multitude of itinerant rhetoricians who took stock themes from conventional morality. These "sophists" were like modern clergymen in whom the professional has absorbed the minister. They made a trade of their eloquence. The "philosopher," often wearing a distinctive garb, would gather a crowd, but he could not handle the problems of life with earnestness (1 Cor. 1:20, 21). At first the Athenians thought that Paul was "a picker-up of learning's chips," and then they politely dismissed him (Acts 17:18ff.). In contrast with the other lecturers who sought to impart by rhetoric some of the culture which was the training of every gentleman, the Christian prophet or apostle spoke not in excellency of speech, but with divine inspiration (1 Cor. 2:1-5, 12, 13). Many were subdued into obedience to this word of power, while others stared at such unwonted conviction and passed by. (For this study see Hatch, "Influence of Greek Ideas on Christian Church"; Mahaffy's "Greek World under Roman Sway"; Gildersleeve's "Essay on Apollonius of Tyana in Classical Essays"; Zeller's "Philosophie der Griechen," III., 2. pp. 126-137; Ramsay's "St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen," ch. xi.)

Study 5: The Sense of Power in the Brotherhood

Fifth Day: The Defeat of Magic

1. There is not a trace of credulity in the New Testament. Its writers do not record strange portents, nor fill their pages with freakish displays of the extraordinary. They are convinced that the power which is within the Church is moral, and must express itself in restrained and congruous manifestations. In marked contrast to this was the practice of magic, which had a greater hold than philosophy on that world, because it was thought to be a gateway to the supernatural universe, before which philosophical speculation stood helpless. Magic had wide vogue, not only in the Orient, Egypt and Asia Minor, but particularly in Samaria, and as a forbidden art among the Jews. It was based on a universal belief in the existence of demons, against which charms were supposed to be potent. The exorcist, accidental and sporadic though his power was in scattering here and there an evil spirit (Matt. 12:27-30), enjoyed much repute. But he was in truth morally helpless.

2. Paul speaks of the world-rulers of this darkness as an atmosphere enveloping life to be dissipated only by the light of the gospel (Eph. 6:12). With faith in the conquering Christ the Christian faced the realm of evil spirits and drove magic from the field wherever he went (1 Peter 3:22; Rom. 8:38, 39). Christ not only was believed to have opened up the new world which magic sought to compass, but to have had a triumphant progress through all the regions of the universe. His death had been cosmic in its effects. It had been a final blow struck at the heart of the kingdom of darkness, and remnants of its dead or dying powers were seen here and there, as the Christian passed hither and thither victorious in the name of Christ (Luke 10:17; Eph. 4:8-10; Col. 2:15).

3. Of several instances recorded in Acts of the worsting of magicians by the new preachers, the most remarkable is the case of Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24), round whose name an immense romance and literature has grown. (See also Acts 13:6-12; 19:13-19.) It is beyond doubt that this sovereignty began with Jesus Himself (Mark 3:23-27), who saw in His success a proof that the kingdom of evil was being dispossessed by the stronger One. Here again the power resides in the dominance of a new Person. (See Ramsay, "St. Paul the Traveler," ch. iv.)

Study 5: The Sense of Power in the Brotherhood

Sixth Day: Kept by the Power of God Unto Salvation

1. The Christian not only possessed exceptional powers and had confidence to go anywhere with his gospel, but he was of this mind because he felt that he was in the protection of an invincible Power (1 John 5:18). Undoubtedly the odds against him were enormous. To an onlooker his life was little more than a vapor drifting for a day on currents of erratic and irresistible force (James 4:14). Behind this visible world there was, he thought, the world-god, lord of innumerable evil spirits, whose influence was so subtle that he breathed it into his life (Eph. 6:12). There was the stream of temptation to ease, worldly hopes, and past association in which many were submerged (Heb. 4:1; 10:35-39). Multitudes endured a fearful struggle against apostasy.

2. But the average Christian had joyful confidence. This is a favorite term in the New Testament vocabulary (Acts 4:13, 29; Phil. 1:20; Heb. 3:6; 1 John 3:21; 4:17). Their God was encamped round about them (1 Peter 1:4, 5). It was no slight demand that was made on the Jewish Christians to entrust their life and its fortunes to the new Israel. Nay, they ventured heroically in abandoning their patriotism, the prestige of a religion consecrated by the promises of God and the glory of temple and ritual, for a religion without visible mediator or offering, with no history behind it or social rank, almost bare in its spiritual simplicity. (This lies at the basis of much of the argument of Hebrews. See 4:14-16; 6:17-20; 7:26-28; 8:1-13; 9:8-10, etc.) Hardly less was required of a Gentile who had to face the scorn of his fellows in joining a foreign brotherhood. In fact nothing but an overwhelming sense of the power of Jesus would have made them willing for the sacrifice (John 10:27-30). If God was for them, who could be against them? (Rom. 8:28-39.)

3. This confidence is often described as "enthusiasm." But the matter does not end there. How was this enthusiasm created? In ordinary life enthusiasm is not always a coefficient of strength. The enthusiastic elements are often the least permanent, being dependent on some exciting cause. Enthusiasm is not a proper description of the tide of life that came in irresistibly and covered forever unhealthy marshes, jagged reefs and piteous wrecks. In the New Testament it is coming to the flood. Never since in Christendom has it fallen to where it was.

Study 5: The Sense of Power in the Brotherhood

Seventh Day: The Holy Spirit of Christ the Source of Power

1. There were of course gifts of the Spirit which might be termed "enthusiastic," but the message of the Kingdom was not merely flung out as Christians gladly abandoned themselves to any danger. Endurance was as much required as enthusiasm, and wisdom, discernment and government were equally noteworthy proofs of the Spirit's presence (1 Cor. 12:8-11). The Christian's finest fruit came through the endurance whereby he was to win his life (Luke 8:15; 21:19; Heb. 10:36-39). He was perfectly conscious of His strength, of which miracles were only one expression.

2. His conviction was that the living Christ was the source of power within him (Rom. 8:11, 14, 15). Two facts are associated in the New Testament—the indwelling of a Spirit within the brethren, and its source in Christ who died for them and rose again (John 20:22; Luke 24:49; Acts 15:8; 2 Cor. 1:21, 22; Heb. 2:4; 6:4; 1 Peter 1:2). That Spirit was a portion of another world, an earnest of final salvation (Eph. 1:13, 14). At their baptism believers received this heavenly gift, but it continued as an active inspiration from Jesus Christ (Acts 10:44, 45; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18). He is the great personal Power on whom in their weakness they throw themselves. Are they able to endure persecution? They know why (1 Peter 4:14). Is the darkness scattering before them? It is because the light is in the world (1 John 3:8; 4:13).

3. In the fourth gospel this Spirit whom they receive from Jesus is called the Paraclete (John, chs. 14-16): He is the Advocate or Support in whom He will return to them again. Acts starts forth the apostolic Church with Pentecost, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the brethren is regarded by them as a proof that the Messianic age has been inaugurated, and that power has been sent to them from their enthroned Lord (Acts 2:4, 16, 38). The active powers of the Spirit were all-sufficient evidence to them that His promise of visiting His people was fulfilled. Every display of energy was a token of the presence of the Spirit of God (Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:49).

4. Such was one side of the power of that brotherhood, their miracles, their all-conquering gospel, their endurance. They never doubted what its source was, and its results were worthy of the origin. To-day no less than then man is under the control of spiritual powers, forces other than himself making for righteousness or for evil. All that is within our choice is to say whether we will entrust ourselves to the keeping of the Holy Spirit of God whose nature Jesus has interpreted to the world.

Study 6: The Christian Character a New Creation

FIRST DAY: THE BAD SOIL IN WHICH THE GOSPEL WAS SOWN

1. No harder and at the same time more vital test can be put to any religion than to require it to bring into existence and perpetuate a new and exacting ethical life. Morality is the crown of our nature. Our conscience is the knowledge which we share with God, and to discover there some new chord responsive to diviner melodies, and to smite upon it till its clear note rises above and controls the earthly dissonance of human hearts, demands a master musician such as appeared with the rise of Christianity. This religion provided a supreme ideal of conduct, and at the same time wrought it out into the actual life of the world. It is called in the New Testament the fruit of the Holy Spirit of God (Matt. 7:16; John 15:16; Rom. 6:22, etc.).

2. We may discern the vitality of the seed when we see the soil in which it grew. Tramped hard by materialism, the world as a whole was almost conscienceless; there were great morasses of what seemed to be irreclaimable sensuality, and the best ground had run out with unsatisfying philosophies and mysteries. "In no period had brute force more completely triumphed, in none was the thirst for material advantages more intense, in few was vice more ostentatiously glorified" (Lecky, "European Morals," I., 181). Are the words of 1 Peter 4:3, 4, too strong to describe the tone of Asia Minor, where Revelry was worshiped as a god, and religion was not only idolatry, but had disgusting practices as an integral part of its ritual?

3. We cannot wonder at the recurrent warnings in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, when we remember that the first object to attract the apostle's regard on his approach to Corinth was the temple of Aphrodite on the Acropolis, in which prostitutes served as priestesses (1 Cor. 5:1-13; 6:9-20; 7:8-10). And Rom. 1:18-32, awful as it is, is no worse than the indictment made by many writers of that age. Slavery had proved a curse, many of the slaves having brought the vilest ideas of the Orient into the homes of the Western world, which soon wrought havoc with the rather high moral tone of Rome during the Republic. Athens, too, had lost her earnestness. The provinces outstripped the capital in depravity. (See Lecky's "History of European Morals." Twelfth edition.)

> "On that hard, pagan world disgust
> And secret loathing fell.
> Deep weariness and sated lust
> Made human life a hell."

Study 6: The Christian Character a New Creation

Second Day: A Yearning Among the Gentiles for Revelation

1. The picture is dark enough. Is there then no light? There is, and however inferior the moral standard was as compared with our ideal, it was sufficient to rouse in many a protest against the hideousness of their great cities. From this class sprang a revival of religion, together with attempts at reform. (See Hatch, pp. 139-141.) There was a widespread membership in clubs and religious guilds involving stringent morals. The age was in fact more religious than that which preceded it. Speculative thought had yielded to a practical philosophy which for a few was almost a religion.

2. The Stoics were the finest of these schools of philosophy. Regarding the present-world order as the best of all possible systems, the Stoic sought to follow nature in accordance with reason, yielding neither to irrational passion nor hoping for a future to remedy the defects of the present. In some of its best representatives Stoicism is suffused with a glow of emotion, while the pious resignation of Marcus Aurelius and the precepts of Epictetus to follow nature and to follow God, show that these men found in their philosophy what others enjoy in religion. But the average Stoic was an impassive sage, self-reliant and often untouched by pity, who would perform every duty and face death, beyond which as a rule he had no outlook, not only with composure, but with a sense of relief. It need hardly be said that this cold and centripetal moral excellence never touched the life of the common man (Acts 17: 18).

3. The Epicurean school can show at this time no such noble adherents as the Stoics, and was followed chiefly by those who wished to provide themselves with a rationale for a life of indifference to public duty and for following passion. Epicureanism had become a filthy stream, befouling any life that it carried on its surface.

4. The world wanted more than philosophy. Men were adrift on an ocean for which philosophy provided neither chart nor compass, and they hailed every craft from the East or elsewhere to give them tidings by revelation of another world in which they would fain believe. This the neo-Pythagorean philosopher claimed to satisfy. He taught that the soul was immortal, but that it must be freed by asceticism from the clogging flesh. Life was to be nobly lived in active virtue from a pure heart in the service of God and one's fellows. But the neo-Pythagorean conception of God was far below that of the Hebrew, and as a system apart from its influence on a few thinkers it was ineffectual, never lifting the heavy burden of life from off the masses of men. (See Sidgwick's "History of Ethics"; Zeller's "Philosophie der Griechen," III., 2, 137-141; Hatch, "Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church," Lecture VI.)

Study 6: The Christian Character a New Creation

Third Day: The Jew Prepares the World for the Gospel

1. In considering the creation of the Christian ideal we must not forget that the backbone of the early Christian communities consisted of Jews and proselytes. An immense number of Jews were settled in the Roman Empire. Harnack estimates them at seven per cent of the urban population. Often eager to make proselytes the Jew had been successful in attaching to his mode of life a vast multitude of "God-fearers" who, while not submitting to his ritual, adopted his monotheism and morals (Acts 13:43; 16:14; 17:17; 18:7). It seems that the masses with their desires turned towards coarse Oriential or Egyptian superstitions, but many of the finer spirits found satisfaction in Judaism, which may also have worked like leaven in many others and prepared the way for Christianity.

2. Now, what had Judaism done for these proselytes and the "God-fearers" who waited in the courts of the synagogue? (a) It had touched a high ethical practice with religious emotion. The Jew was contented, it is true, with an average "wisdom," safe, but never heroic. He had, however, always before his eyes the fear of God and His commandments, even if he had no burning passion for a pure and lofty ideal, nor would ever cast the present world and its chances from him for the sake of an absorbing spiritual venture. He was a religious Stoic. (b) Judaism also did something to create a moral conscience, preserving as it did a simplicity of heart and life and a rigorous ideal of purity for the individual and the home.

3. But Judaism at its best could never become a world-wide religion. It was too exclusive. Even in the Western world which had rubbed off his sharpest angles the Jew was a disagreeably superior person. He looked askance at both the proselyte and the "God-fearer." Some highly educated men there were, like Philo, who taught the Stoic ideal of the brotherhood of men, but they were few and had no influence on the common Jew, who hated and was hated by the Gentile world. In fact, the Jewish feeling of superiority gave rise to the gravest problem of the early Church. Paul came forward with his free gospel, teaching that there was to be no privileged or exclusive caste in the brotherhood. So Christianity simply swept into itself multitudes who had, while worshiping with the Jews, been wistfully looking for a truer revelation of God.

Study 6: The Christian Character a New Creation

Fourth Day: The Gospel a Word of God to a Depraved World

1. True on the whole as was the judgment of the Jew with regard to his superiority over his Gentile neighbor in intelligence and morality, the people were nevertheless depraved enough. Insincerity had eaten like a canker into their life. In Palestine there were the Pharisees. The Sadducaic spirit—materialistic, sensual, selfish—was also abroad. Magic and superstition accompanied by vice had made great inroads among the Jews of the Western Dispersion. Paul's judgment on the Jew in Rom. 2:1-29 is just, for his guilt was equally deep with that of the Gentile.

2. The fact of importance is that the world as a whole was morally bankrupt. It had sought to revive its credit by taking stock in any religion or philosophy which promoters might set before it. But this was part of the difficulty confronting Christianity. The ethical reserve of the world had been exhausted. A new character had to be created. The older religions had been immoral. Purity was not essential in their gods. It was the philosopher and the poet, not the priest, who preached the highest morality. Philosophy had sought to prove, and with success, that virtue is the truest reason, being inherent in the constitution of things. Knowledge, it is said, is virtue, but such knowledge is only within the reach of the wise man, so that it was doubtful whether the highest virtue was attainable even by the best mortals of this world.

3. Does not our educated world to-day require to learn the truth of which men became, in those days, aware so painfully, that knowledge of virtue is not the solution of the problem of conduct? That age needed power and authority. It was an hungered for revelation; it was ready for a religion that would come with "thus saith the Lord." And there can be no doubt that the early gospel was proclaimed in no hesitating manner. There was no lack of conviction in the preacher. This was part of the reason why he was believed, and when the world listened to his message

> "A conquering, new-born joy awoke,
> And filled her life with day."

4. Christianity brought her message of authority just where it was needed. The gospel was preached first in cities which were as a rule more profligate than the country districts. It was planted in Antioch, glorying in her "Daphnic morals"; in Corinth, whose name was current in a word denoting vice of the worst sort, and in Rome, the sink of the empire. Certainly the gospel did not refuse to challenge the god of this world in his strongholds.

Study 6: The Christian Character a New Creation

Fifth Day: The Message of Israel as to Righteousness and Sin

1. Why does Jesus say, "Salvation is of the Jews"? (John 4:22.) What advantage had the Jew in the history of religion? (Rom. 3:1ff.) Within Israel God had revealed His character as nowhere else; this people had enjoyed the richest endowment of spiritual life. So Christianity, which was to take up and carry to completion the best that God had made known concerning Himself, became the true successor to Israel, became in fact the real Israel. Not only Jesus but His apostles recognize that He came to fulfill the past, to bring to perfection truths that were adumbrated in the law and the prophets (Matt. 5:17; Heb. 1:1).

2. What was the message of Israel to the world? (Mark 12:28-31.) God is an ethical Person, but He is also the one almighty Creator of heaven and of earth. His will is absolute, and it is also perfect in righteousness. Thus the divine will becomes the law of righteousness for men. The divine will had been embodied in the divine law as it is set forth in the Old Testament, and it served as a noble moral discipline for those who lived under it, eliciting from the finest spirits their strong devotion to its observance. This was quite a different position from that of the Greeks, who regarded virtue as a matter of universal reason shared by gods and men alike. According to the Hebrew ideal of conduct virtue is righteousness, obedience to the will of a holy God.

3. Further the elaborate ritual of worship served to inspire the Israelite with reverence for the inviolate purity of his God, which was to be reflected also in his civil and personal life. The people of Jehovah must be clean in heart, soul, and body. Even Isaiah is a man of unclean lips (Isa. 6). But the holiness of Jehovah is not only ritual in its nature, it is moral. This introduced a conception which was in large measure foreign to the world outside of Judaism. There is none good but one, that is God (Mark 10:18), for all have disobeyed God's law (Rom. 3:9-18). Sin is thus lawlessness (1 John 3:4), it is a transgression of the limits which God has appointed as right conduct (Rom. 5:13, 14). Sin is not merely shortcoming in reaching forth to an ideal, nor a flaw in our progress which we shall outgrow, nor a disease, nor defective knowledge. All moral evil is sin; it is trespass against a holy God.

Study 6: The Christian Character a New Creation

Sixth Day: Love of a Father's Will which is Truth Displaces Fear

1. Christianity had a splendid ground in the Old Testament religion on which to build, but there was much accumulated rubbish to be cleared away before it got down to the real conscience of the common people, overlaid as it had been by the instruction of the scribes. The law had become so encrusted with traditional enactments that its original meaning was forgotten, and the whole system had to be punctiliously observed under pain of Divine displeasure. Righteousness was to the average Pharisee obedience to an outward code, to a letter that killed (2 Cor. 3: 6ff.).

2. As a result of this view of righteousness fear played a large part as a motive for obedience, and some of the finer religious feelings, such as gratitude and love, which pulse through the prophetic books of the Old Testament, are but faintly apparent in the works of the Pharisees. The Pharisee did not love his God. He stood in awe of Him as a taskmaster. Ancient ethics generally shared with later Judaism this conception of fear as the ruling factor in determining the relation of man to God. (See Wundt's Ethics.)

3. But Christianity changed all that. Jesus taught that God is a Father. He loves His children, and they should love Him. God so loved the world as to give His best (John 3:16); indeed all our love springs from God's nature (1 John 4:19). Morality ceases to be an external code, lifeless and terrorizing. It is the expression of a holy and loving will (1 Peter 1:15-17). The holiness and goodness of the Divine nature are erected into a standard for life, which both in its completeness and its power drives from the field all competing ideals. Truth is no longer merely an intellectual conception, but the practical essence of life; it is the will of a Holy Father who loves us, and obedience to this will becomes the truth for the believer (John 8:32; 14:6; James 1:18).

4. Love now displaces fear as a motive in religion (Rom. 8:31-39; 1 John 3:19-22; 4:17-19). The revelation of the divine nature as the Holy Father makes His commands for us no irksome precepts, to be obeyed because we are compelled by alarm at the consequences of disobedience, but we become eager in seeking what the will of God for us is (1 John 4:7-12; 5:3, 4).

Study 6: The Christian Character a New Creation

Seventh Day: Forgiveness of Sins and Faith at the Root of Christian Character

1. Moreover, the Christian teaching went far beyond Judaism in the meaning it gave to sin. The holier and more loving God the Father is, the more awful is disobedience to His will. So we come upon another fundamental doctrine in the Christian life, that of forgiveness of sins. It lay at the basis of the new ethics. All men are sinful and sin brings death, but the gospel message was that though God hates sin He has not averted His face from the sinner, but forgives his sin. This is Divine "grace." Never before had the world understood as it did in the apostolic age the mercy of God in pardoning sinful man (Mark 2:10). It was the great promise of the new covenant of the Messianic era (Jer. 31:33, 34; cf. Matt. 26:28).

2. The condition of forgiveness, however, was faith (Acts 13:38, 39). Faith in its simplest idea is trust. He who believes trusts in the mercy of God, places himself entirely in His keeping, and opens his whole nature to receive from God whatever gracious influence His Spirit may impart. There is no pride, self-sufficiency, nor self-reliance in faith. It recognizes the helplessness of the natural man and flings its whole burden in obedience upon the love of God (Gal. 2:20, 21; Heb. 11:1, 6; 1 John 5:4). Here there was a great gulf fixed between Judaism and Christianity. The Jewish religion was ruled by the conception of law —"thou shalt," "thou shalt not." But this legalism proved to be a tragic failure, for it crucified the sinless One, and Paul, perhaps its greatest disciple, has left a terrible indictment of the system. There was never a law that could give life. It simply showed man his helplessness (Gal. 2:15ff.; 3:21-26; Rom. 7:7-end).

3. Thus Christian ethics has an inwardness which no other system ever possessed. Morals issue from a new life created within man's heart by the Spirit of God. Life becomes a very much profounder conception. It is not bounded by the present seen world, nor by man's inherent ethical capacity or spiritual endowment. It is the perfection of manhood begotten anew by the Spirit of God which shows itself in virtues of conduct (2 Cor. 5:17; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; Gal. 5:22, 23). God grants this gift of life to faith. Faith lays hold of a living Person, Jesus Christ the Revealer of the Father, and the Christian character is the result.

Study 7: The Ethical Ideal of the New Character

First Day: How was the Will of God Known?

1. Since the new Christian character springs from a new life we must next consider the form in which this life expressed itself. Fundamentally it was a fulfillment of the will of God, for this is righteousness (Mark 3:35; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 6:6; Col. 4:12; Heb. 10:36; 1 John 2:17). But how was the believer to discover the will of God? Was there any standard of that will to which the individual should conform?

2. This will was made known to them in a variety of ways. There was the Divine Spirit which dwelt within the heart and guided the believer in the way of God (Phil. 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; 4:14; James 4:6; John 14:17; 16:13). But this Spirit wrought through various agencies suggesting the will of God. There was the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 10:14, 15), for the Word of God itself was living, and appealed to the heart (Heb. 4:12). The Spirit was also a power within the apostles and prophets whose teaching and counsel directed the course of the brotherhood (1 Cor. 2:16). Further, each individual had his own hard or joyous discipline in which he could discover the will of God. No one would conform to any other, God having a purpose for each (Rom. 8:26, 27; James 1:2; 1 Peter 1:6, 7).

3. But unquestionably the form and substance in which the Spirit found chief expression was the life of Jesus Christ. He gave moment to the Word of God, to the preaching and counsel of the apostles, and to the private discipline of each one's soul. He stood before them as the great Exemplar of character. Did Jesus offer Himself to be a Guide unto life? (See Mark 8:34f.; Matt. 28:18-20.) Why did He call men to Him? (Matt. 11:27-30.) He was a teacher who could not only tell them the will of God, but One who embodied it in Himself (Luke 22:42-45). It was also the view of the apostolic Church that Jesus had fulfilled the will of God in every respect, and that on this account He was the standard to which humanity shall be conformed (John 6:38; Eph. 4:13; Heb. 2:9-11; 10:9).

Study 7: The Ethical Ideal of the New Character

Second Day: Jesus Christ the Perfect Exemplar

1. Whatever exalted conceptions the early brethren entertained of the Person of the Messiah, they never forgot that He had lived a truly human life on earth (1 John 4:2, 3). This fact prevented them from becoming mystics with an ideal floating in cloudland. They remained disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. No more proof can be required for this than that so large a part of the New Testament is devoted to the record of the earthly life of Jesus. Though the gospels were later in origin than the most of the epistles, they became the first authoritative part of the canon. The life of Jesus is also assumed to be known to the readers of the epistles. It is probable that the ideal of the earthly Jesus as presented to the average Christian was of the type which we have in the synoptic gospels, for the fourth gospel did not enter into the general stream of the Church life till after the others had been widely circulated for some years.

2. But it is difficult to determine how far the earthly life of Jesus supplied the example for the daily duties of the Christian. He stood at the beginning of their history, of course, as the most perfect conceivable character, but His problems were different from theirs, and they could not slavishly copy His actions. It was His mind which they desired to possess. They became His true followers through His Spirit (Phil. 2:5, 12, 13). He was also the "Prince Leader in the faith" (Heb. 12:2). Undoubtedly much of His instruction on matters of conduct was remembered, but it is, as we shall see, surprising how little of this consisted of detailed precepts. He had given principles. His words were deep, so that no follower could understand them by parrot-like repetition, but worked out his own salvation by discovering in life their import. The Sermon on the Mount was no new external code of ethics, and most of His discussions with His opponents, and His parables were illustrative of the right attitude of man to God and to his fellows, and suggestive of its application. If the law is the will of God, what is the pith of it? (Matt. 22:35-40.)

Study 7: The Ethical Ideal of the New Character

Third Day: Obedience to the Will of God in Christ Brings True Freedom

1. Jesus is regarded by the various writers from different points of view. To the author of James He is the Messiah who gave sanction to the royal law of the new kingdom. This law is a law of liberty under which the fruits of divine wisdom throve (James 1:25; 2:8, 12; 3:17, 18). Jesus stands forth in Hebrews as One who by His endurance of the sufferings of a thoroughly human life became the first who attained to perfect faith, and the ideal of the believer's effort (Heb. 2:17, 18; 12:2, 3). In First Peter, Christ is the Example (2:21). According to John believers obey the commands of Christ which are summed up in love, itself a reproduction of His own character, the fount of love (1 John 3:24; 4:7-17).

2. It is often said with truth that Paul had a relatively small interest in the historical Jesus, because he only knew Him as the risen Christ. (See, however, the conception of His character in Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 8:9.) Also a word of Jesus is final (1 Cor. 7:10; 9:14; 1 Cor. 11:23). Reminiscences of His teaching may be found perhaps in Rom. 12:14, 17; 16:19; 1 Cor. 13:2; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 3:3. But he laid more stress upon the character and person of Jesus than on the details of His earthly life. Christ was for him a present living Person, yet One who had lived on earth, and whose character had a very definite ethical content, which was to be reproduced in the believer (Eph. 4:20-24).

3. Jesus Christ thus bodied forth the will of God. And to have this will wrought into actual conduct was to be sanctified (1 Thess. 4:3; Heb. 12:14). The comprehensiveness of this sanctification finds its best expression in Rom. 12:1, 2. But is the will of God so very simple, or do we require trained spiritual faculties to discern it? (Heb. 5:14.) The first step in this process of sanctification is to obey whatever is known of God's will (2 Cor. 10:5; Heb. 3:12; 4:1; 5:9; 1 Peter 4:17; 1 John 5:2, 3).

4. Along with obedience goes Christian freedom (Gal. 5:13). No life is like any other. Each has its own character, therefore liberty must be granted to each to fulfill the will of God as the Spirit may guide. Paul met much opposition in preaching freedom from an external legalism, the Jewish Christian holding that this was merely to court license. How could ignorant Gentiles be educated into decency without a law? (Rom. 6:12-end.) He substitutes a Person as the embodiment of the Divine will (Gal. 3:1-5). Strange as it may appear they attained freedom when they became slaves of Christ. For He being the supreme Person must be the final authority, and to acknowledge Him brings true liberty.

Study 7: The Ethical Ideal of the New Character

Fourth Day: Love the New and Best Fruit of the Spirit

1. To learn Christ is to put off the old life, whether the ingrained evil habitude of the Gentiles (1 Peter 1:18; 4:2, 3), or the accumulated prejudices and vices of the Jews—both of which are in essence the friendship of the world. The world is opposed to the will of God, and the Christian must renounce the worldly mind (Matt. 16:23). The mind of Christ, however, manifests itself in a unique character, the virtues of which were a new ethical creation of extraordinary richness. Though they are common to all the writings of the New Testament, it is in the epistles of Paul that they are most fully described. The will of God for men is partially expressed in what Paul calls "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22, 23; Eph. 5:9). Some of these graces are as follows.

2. Love. This is the supreme virtue of Christianity (1 Cor. 13:13). It is a new word (ἀγάπη) for a new virtue. It does not occur in classical Greek, and no less remarkable, the common classical word for the love of passion (ἔρως) is not found in the New Testament. Love is a motive power of surpassing efficacy in the realm of conduct, and is in itself sufficient to distinguish Christian ethics radically from pagan or even Jewish teaching. God is the source of love (1 John 4:7, 8, 16, 19), and by His Spirit it is shed upon our hearts (Rom. 5:5). It is a new virtue because it springs from the fact of redemption. Never until Christ came was the depth of the Father's love made known to the world (John 13:34; 15:12; 1 John 2:7, 8).

3. Love is a virtue of the whole man—of the mind because it is intellectual and spiritual (Phil. 4:8; 1 Cor. 13:6) [There was a fine old Greek virtue—αἰδώς regard for the sanctity of the divine—which was akin to this intellectual element in Christian love.]—of the will because it was a source of unwearied effort on behalf of all, even one's enemies (Matt. 5:44; 18:21; 1 Cor. 13:6, 7; Heb. 10:24; Gal. 6:10)—and it is burdened with the purest emotion (Rom. 8:35-39; James 2:5; 1 Peter 1:8; 1 John 4:18).

4. There is an immense vocabulary of words denoting the qualities of a lovable disposition. It cannot indeed be claimed that goodness of heart was a new virtue, for there was at this time a rising feeling of sympathy for those under suffering, and there are intimations of humanity even in classical authors, not a little human kindliness, and a regard for the morally heroic. (See Butcher, p. 76.) But the Greeks had not much more than a fine instinct, often overborne by selfishness, and "the utmost point that this development reached fell considerably short of the standard of Christian charity" (Sidgwick, p. 110). In the Christian, however, the heart is mellowed by the love of God into a goodness that must find liberal expression.

Study 7: The Ethical Ideal of the New Character

Fifth Day: Goodness, Beneficence, Longsuffering, Patience

1. Goodness and Beneficence. These two beautiful words, the latter of which ἀγαθωσύνη is a coinage of the Christian spirit, are expressions of Christian love and a great enrichment of morals. They signify that goodness of heart wherein man is most like unto God (Rom. 15:14; Eph. 5:9; 2 Thess. 1:11). Christ was preëminently "good" (Acts 10:38; 1 Peter 2:3). So the Christian has a liberal, generous soul, and can afford to be lavish of goodness to others because of the boundless grace he has experienced from God in Christ (Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 9:11; Heb. 6:10; 1 John 3:16, 17). This goodness took on a great many different forms. Its possessor was open-hearted and open-handed, and, though no ascetic, gladly gave his worldly goods to his brethren. (See the ideal of the early Church in Acts 2:44-46.) Is it correct to call this communism? When Christian goodness was directed towards the brethren it was termed "love of the brethren" (φιλαδελφία), all sons of a heavenly Father (1 Thess. 4:9; Heb. 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22). This virtue gets expression also in "hospitality" (Heb. 13:1; 3 John; Rev. 2:19), and in "compassion" (1 Peter 3:8; Heb. 10:33, 34; James 2:14-16). Love abhors evil, cleaves to the good and overcomes evil with good (Rom. 12:9ff.).

2. While love is the most comprehensive of the Christian virtues, it is probable that longsuffering is equally characteristic. Patience is very nearly related to longsuffering. The former is steadfastness under suffering, perseverance in a course of action, especially the continuance of unflagging zeal in distressful circumstances (James 5:7-11; Heb. 6:12). Longsuffering usually carries with it the idea of forbearance. The Christian shall not return evil for evil, and is slow to avenge a personal wrong, the supreme motive and example being found in the life of his Master (Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Peter 3:9-18).

3. Is it correct to say that in the Christian ideal a passive patience and endurance were substituted for the old pagan virtue of courage, and that in this respect Christian morals were deficient? "In this noble word patience (ὑπομονή) there always appears in the New Testament a background of courage (ἀνδρεία) . . . . It is the brave patience with which the Christian contends against the various hindrances, persecutions and temptations that befall him in his conflict with the inward and outward world" (Ellicott).

Study 7: The Ethical Ideal of the New Character

Sixth Day: Gentleness, Meekness, Humility, Fidelity, Self-Restraint

1. Gentleness, meekness, humility, are germane to longsuffering. Jesus was "meek and lowly in heart." This is also a distinctively Christian virtue, though the Greeks had a kindred conception in the fine word, "equity" (ἐπιεικεία) "sweet reasonableness," which came into the Christian vocabulary unstained by debasing associations, and with the best traditions of pagan morals (Acts 24:4; 2 Cor. 10:1; Phil. 4:5; James 3:17).

2. Gentleness was indeed not unknown among the heathen moralists, but it was held in low esteem by Aristotle, whose ideal was the high-minded man, he who in his pride of heart deems himself worthy of great things, because he actually is worthy. "The Greek ideal of the perfect gentleman (ὁ καλοκἀγαθός) has in it a touch of aristocratic sentiment; it was well fitted for the favored few, for the gifted, for the noble, for the strong; but it left out of account the disinherited, the fallen, the feeble of the earth" (Butcher, p. 75). The word which in the New Testament is translated humble (ταπεινός) meant to the Greek what was abject and servile.

3. Jesus made the meek spirit a premier virtue (Matt. 5:5; 11:29). He called the poor and the humble into His kingdom, all those who in spite of worldly oppression and adverse conditions were cherishing the hope that some day they would be able to worship God in true righteousness and holiness without fear (Luke 1:74, 75). Meekness is no natural disposition, but is an inwrought grace of the heart (Rom. 12:3; 1 Peter 3:4, 5). It is based on a true knowledge of self as it appears when the spotless purity of Christ's life is flashed upon us. "Meekness represses the claim of personal merit because even in the saint there is a continual sense of imperfection, so that he must rely utterly on a strength that is not his own" (Sidgwick, "Ethics," p. 122).

4. Other virtues such as trustworthiness (1 Cor. 4:2; Col. 1:2; Luke 12:42ff.) and self-restraint (1 Peter 1:13; 4:7; 1 Tim. 2:9; Titus 2:12) were well known to the pagans, but became intensified, the one by growing into loyalty to Christ, the other through the mastery of a new Spirit controlling the Christian against a false freedom in thought or action.

Study 7: The Ethical Ideal of the New Character

Seventh Day: The New Conscience of the World

1. It is obvious that several of the terms which we have considered were current in contemporary language. They may have been familiar to Paul because he was educated in Tarsus, one of the centers of Stoical philosophy. But they do not all owe their introduction to him, for the conceptions occur throughout the New Testament. Christianity, however, gathered them up together with the four cardinal Greek virtues, courage, self-restraint, prudence, and justice, mellowing here, transforming there by the subtle alchemy of faith and love, and made them ingredients among other richer virtues of its own creation in the new conscience of the world. "That crowning triumph of ethical nomenclature, conscience (*συνείδησις*)," gets new contents and sanction when Christ Himself in His Spirit becomes a conscience to the believer (Acts 24: 16; Rom. 2:15; Heb. 10:22; 1 Peter 2:19).

2. But not less remarkable is the omission from the New Testament of one of the leading terms of Greek ethics. The word happiness (*εὐδαιμονία*) does not occur in the New Testament, even in the noble conception given it by Aristotle (Eth. Nic. x., 7), though it figures in almost every moralist as the chief pursuit of life, and that not only in the form of Stoical apathy or Epicurean pleasure. Selfishness in any aspect, even "self-realization" as the aim of the merely natural man, is antagonistic to the spirit of the gospel. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Rom. 12:1, 2).

3. One or two remarks as to the ethical ideal of the New Testament. (a) The wonderfully rich and varied nomenclature shows that a creative power was at work, ramifying far and wide in our complex moral nature, and getting expression from every source for a very full standard of conduct. (b) The catalogues of vices illustrate the nature of the awful forces the new religion had to face, and how closely the morals of the world were studied (1 Cor. 5:10f.; Gal. 5:19; Rom. 1:29ff.; 1 Peter 4:3; James and Revelation *passim*). (c) It was positive, including duty to God, man and one's self (Titus 2:12), a life complete because in the Kingdom of God. Christianity was not ascetism, nor the renunciation of the world alone. (d) It was not a system of sporadic virtues, nor an ineffective dream like Stoicism. It professed to be fruit from a new principle of life created within the heart by the Spirit of God in Christ. (On this study see Newman Smyth's "Christian Ethics"; E. v. Dobschütz's, "The Churches of Primitive Christendom"—soon to be translated.)

Study 8: The Christian Ideal of Domestic Life

First Day: The Evil Condition of Home Life Among Romans and Greeks

1. Our home and our intercourse with immediate friends supply the amplest opportunity for the discipline of character. In our conduct towards those with whom we share the intimacies of life three-fourths of the web of destiny are woven. It is a perversion of judgment against which reason often protests to assign rank to manhood according to public performance alone. The region of the commonplace is the battlefield of character; and of this region the home forms the largest portion in most lives. Wherefore we desire to put the Christian ideal, which has just been outlined, to the searching test of how it was wrought out in simple everyday life.

2. The contemporary world seemed to have lost its power of protecting human love from impurity. In spite of the favorable opinion of Dr. Hatch that "there was in ancient Rome, as there is in modern London, a preponderating mass of those who loved their children and their homes, who were good neighbors and faithful friends, who conscientiously discharged their civil duties, and were in all the current senses of the word 'moral'" ("Greek Ideas," etc., 139, 140), there are only too strong grounds for holding that both in the Roman and the Greek world the home life was degraded. There were of course frequent examples of conjugal felicity (how awful must it have been otherwise!), but a flood of immorality from the East and from the provinces swept over Italy during the later Republic. Selfishness led to celibacy, many of the finer spirits espoused ascetism, and the emperor introduced legislation to encourage marriage, lest the empire should become childless.

3. Greece even in the days of her intellectual preëminence had been in worse case than Rome. The wife was not the equal of her husband, and he, if a man of education, would consort with brilliant courtesans known as *hetæræ,* who were accorded an admiration which it is impossible for us to conceive. "We must face the fact that the very period which is renowned in Greek literature and art as that of greatest splendor was a time also of moral rottenness." (Blümner, "Home Life of Ancient Greeks," ch. iv.; Lecky, "European Morals," ch. v.) Instead of improving as the years went by, the life of Asia Minor and Greece had lost its restraint, and was quite depraved when the gospel was first preached.

Study 8: The Christian Ideal of Domestic Life

Second Day: The Purity of the Jewish Home Inherited by Christianity

1. In contrast to the heathen world the Hebrew had an almost ideal home life. In the Old Testament ascetism has no place, virginity is no virtue, and the family is a token of God's blessing (Ps. 127). Reverence of parents by the children is not only enjoined in the Decalogue, but has a blessing attached (Ex. 20:12). On the whole these traits are preserved in later Judaism, which exalted purity, and encouraged education; and no finer pictures of the gracious and peaceful homes of "the poor" can be found than those in Luke 1 and 2. Some Jewish doctors of the law, it is true, allowed divorce for trifling cause, but there were equally influential teachers who were strict, and whose judgment would be accepted by the average Jew. (See Matt. 19:3ff.)

2. But Judaism had no great influence in this respect upon the morals of the empire. Indeed the Jew felt that his own safety consisted in avoiding the pollutions of the heathen world, and we cannot be surprised that not only were marriages with unbelievers forbidden, but also that it was a condition that a proselyte to Judaism should on his conversion be separated from the unbelieving partner, lest the heathen influences of the home should prove too much for the purer life of the synagogue.

3. Christianity thus started with a fine tradition concerning marriage. Its followers brought with them a noble austerity in regard to personal purity and the sacredness of the home. Indeed it began as a house religion. The brotherhood was a large family which was protected by love against invasion by the spirit of the world. As a rule the ordinary homes were not broken up, for it was only the few whom Jesus asked to renounce these in order to follow Him (Luke 14:26). Husbands and wives, parents and children still loved one another. The husband who returned from the love feast would reverence his wife with a gentler chastity, and cherish his child with a diviner affection. It is probable indeed that the worth of marriage was affected by the conditions of that age. Since there was need to proclaim the gospel with all haste to a perishing world, many had to forsake their settled homes (Matt. 19:12), and the expectation that Jesus would soon return also had its influence (1 Cor. 7:26-35).

Study 8: The Christian Ideal of Domestic Life

Third Day: The Christian Conception of Marriage

1. In harmony with the teaching of Jesus who invested the marriage relation with religious sanction (Mark 10:6-12), Paul ennobles it by the highest possible comparison. It becomes the type of the union between Christ and the Church. Thus marriage is at once consecrated by religion, and natural affection is thereby enriched as with the mellowness and color of ripened fruit (Eph. 5:22-33). Husband and wife are fellow heirs of life. Therefore their home must be pervaded by the spirit of prayer, and their days should be spent in good works and the practice of their faith (1 Peter 3:7).

2. Family duties are outlined especially for those readers whose Gentile antecedents had provided no strong foundation on which to build a good home. A chaste and reverent love is enjoined on the husband towards his wife, because she is a part of himself. His duties are kindly consideration, nay, honor, just because though they are equal in the sight of God she needs his help and protection (Eph. 5:25, 28; 1 Peter 3:7). Of the woman respectful submission is required, probably a necessary injunction because through reaction from former repression she might be in danger of abusing her liberty (Eph. 5:22, 23; 1 Peter 3: 1-6). Modesty in mien and attire, a life full of restraint, and graced by good works are becoming in a mother of the true Israel (1 Tim. 2:9-12).

3. "In Paul's teaching we have all the elements of the perception that the unique union of marriage was also the birthplace of an unprecedented and incomparable ethical culture, and precisely in the form of a union in the faith was to attain its highest development." (Weizsäcker, "Apostolic Age," II., p. 390.)

4. Much difficulty was occasioned by the mixed marriages of Christians and unbelievers. It is dealt with in 1 Cor. 7:12-14. Here the Christian ideal moves on a higher plane than the Jewish. The Jew said to the proselyte, Leave your unbelieving partner and escape pollution. The Christian, secure in the power of the gospel, says, Overcome the world by living with your partner, wherever that is agreeable to both, in order that the sanctifying influences of the Divine Spirit working in the Christian life may soften the other's heart. Thus in marriage the creative power of the new religion was manifested. Its very sacredness and inviolability makes it a lever for propagating the faith. Christianity was not helpless in the face of the impurity of the world. It proposed to conquer the world even in the home.

Study 8: The Christian Ideal of Domestic Life

Fourth Day: The Child; Purity; Chivalry; Woman's Dignity

1. In another respect Jewish practice had been a constant rebuke to the heathen world—its abhorrence of infanticide or the exposure of children. In spite of strong sentiment against it and severe repressive legislation, the practice was frightfully common. Christianity again deepened the sacredness of life. The child becomes the figure of the spirit to which the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven stand open (Mark 10:14, 15, 16; 1 Cor. 7:14; Eph. 6:4). From the new religion there issued a flood of sympathy, and the cry of the children entered into the ears of the brotherhood of love, who soon organized a system of relief for orphans and the destitute. The principle is found in James 1:27. (See Lecky, II., ch. iv.)

2. No less characteristic of the Christian ideal is the standard of individual purity which is consistently held forth in every part of the New Testament. The laxity of morals made the progress of the new religion particularly difficult, and the epistles afford abundant evidence that one of the most frequent trials of the brethren was found in the reversions of their fellow believers to Gentile sensuality (1 Thess. 4:1-8; 1 Cor. 5:6, 7; 10:1-13; 1 Peter 2:11, 12; 4:1-6; Rev. 2:14, 15, 20, 21). But the gospel was effective and a new sense of chastity was wrought out in these Christian circles.

3. Woman was also raised to a new dignity by the place assigned her in the church. Jesus Himself had set the example of gracious courtesy (John 4:27; Luke 7:36-end; 10:38-41), and this was soon displayed by his followers in a fine chivalry towards women. This was all the more remarkable because the position of woman in the Greek world, and the former life of degradation from which many of the Christians had been rescued, afforded many delicate problems in respect to her function and worth in the life of the Church (1 Cor. 7:8; 11:3-6; 14:34ff.).

4. And woman responded gladly to a gospel which offered her so much. Large numbers flocked into the church. Not only in the province of Macedonia, where the sex had long enjoyed higher privileges than elsewhere, are there honorable women not a few (Acts 16:14; Phil. 4:2), but possibly in Colossæ a wealthy matron provided the church with a home (Col. 4:15). For others see Rom. 16:1, 3, especially that extraordinary woman Priscilla, who did not preside over a house-church, but was a missionary, and even taught the cultured Apollos (Acts 18:26). Numbers of the most ardent propagandists of the cross and of its most enduring martyrs were women, and this continued to be the case, very many of them Gentile by birth, often indeed drawn from the imperial society (See Harnack's "Ausbreitung des Christenthums," p. 398.)

Study 8: The Christian Ideal of Domestic Life

Fifth Day: Slavery in the Pagan World

1. There can be no doubt that slavery had proved a great curse to the ancient world. In the Greek cities especially slaves formed a large factor in the population, and they were dragged in multitudes at the heels of the Roman conquerors of the later republic and earlier empire as they returned home. Throughout Italy and the provinces country estates were worked by gangs of slaves whose absentee masters gave no heed to their hapless condition, so woe-begone that, as Mommsen says, in comparison with them, "it is quite possible that the sum of all negro sufferings is but a drop." The state of matters in the city was better; "The bookkeeper, the merchant's clerk, the reader, and private secretary of the man of position, his agent, the tutor of his children, his family physician, the actor, and the prima donna were not engaged, but bought" (Zahn). Slave service was essential to the life of culture which the wealthier classes enjoyed. Slaves lived to do the pleasure of their masters. It would not be just to judge of the average condition of the slave by the frightful stories of outrage perpetrated on the slaves by monsters of cruelty, for frequently the relations were of the most kindly sort. But the slave remained the absolute property of one who could dispose of him at will, and where there was nothing but a natural kindliness to restrain caprice, the coarseness of the age led to an excess of brutality rather than of humanity. Accustomed to hear the saying, "As many enemies as there are slaves," the average Roman would ask, Is he a person or a chattel? What was there left to one who was forbidden the rights of married life, of citizenship, of public recognition, indeed of anything he could call his own? While it is impossible to estimate exactly the slave population, it is probably below the mark to put down that of the city of Rome at three hundred thousand. Many of them were depraved Orientals, and coming in like a flood they introduced vicious ideas and practices, undermined the purity of the home and corrupted public morals.

But there was a wave of humanity spreading over that world. Epictetus, the greatest of Roman moralists, was once a slave; the Stoics exerted a wide influence for good, and Seneca writes: "He is a slave, you say. Yet perchance he is free in spirit. He is a slave. Will this harm him? Show me who is not. One is a slave to lust, another to avarice, a third to ambition, all alike to fear." (See Lecky, I., 262; Dobschütz, "Die urchristlichen Gemeinden," Appendix.)

Study 8: The Christian Ideal of Domestic Life

Sixth Day: Christianity's Advance Towards the Solution of the Problem of Slavery

1. The Stoics did much to ameliorate the condition of the slave by diffusing kindlier sentiments and in particular by their influence on individual masters; but they were primarily philosophers, their teaching was largely theoretic, and "there was an intellectual one-sidedness and false pathos for the woes of the time" (Heinrici).

2. Judaism held an incomparably higher position in this matter. In the Old Testament slaves were part of the family, for whom as for his children the head of the house was responsible. They shared the religion of Israel and were treated as human beings. But Judaism had always remained more or less isolated, and it seems to have drawn but few of its proselytes from the slave ranks. Humane as the Jews were they made no definite contribution to the slave question after the close of the Old Testament.

3. Wherein did Christianity make an effective contribution to this awful problem? The apostles introduce no new theory as to slavery, for they seem to have gone out into the world with the Jewish ideal, but they do initiate a marvelously original and bold practice. While philosophers dreamed the Christians accepted slaves as brethren, and they became new men. Whether or not he was a "person" on earth, the slave was a citizen of the eternal Kingdom of God, and there and then he was ushered into a fellowship of love, which was no theory, but a social fact of tremendous ethical power. The religious basis for this is given in Gal 3:28. Where in all literature is there a more charming picture than the letter of Paul to Philemon? The believing slave becomes a member of a Christian home and is treated as children are, while the unbelieving slave rests upon the heart of his master as a life to be won for his Lord. What a change has passed upon that society when master and slave sit round a common table, unite their prayers, and greet one another with a kiss of love. Is it possible to discover anywhere a finer delicacy than is attested by the absence of all reference to servitude from the multitudes of inscriptions in the Roman catacombs, though the Church was reproached with having become a refuge for the poor and the slaves?

Study 8: The Christian Ideal of Domestic Life

Seventh Day: Slavery and Work

1. To sum up the attitude of Christianity to slavery. It was no less remarkable in what it omitted than in what it enjoined. (1) Slavery is accepted as a public institution, and the Christian slave must submit to his lot (1 Cor. 7:20-24; 1 Peter 2:18; 1 Tim. 6:1). (2) The slave has a spiritual freedom that makes him superior to his lot, and a compensating joy as a brother beloved (Eph. 6:6, 7). (3) Christian masters must mitigate the disabilities of their slaves, whether Christian or non-Christian (Eph. 6:9). (4) Eventually the spirit of love and equality led to frequent manumission, and has resulted in the conscience of the modern world.

2. Some acute problems emerged. (1) For slaves with heathen masters. Doubtless they were allowed to practise their religion, though it often brought them petty persecution (1 Peter 2:18-21), and to return from the freedom of the brotherhood to the temptations of their pagan life was hard, being a severe discipline against which they fretted. (2) For slaves with believing masters. There was danger from the levelling instinct, the undue assertion of privilege, against which Eph. 6:5-8; 1 Tim. 6:1, 2 are directed.

3. One of the worst results of slavery was the false view of life engendered in the free classes. Manual labor was shunned by the free citizen, the word "mechanical" (βάναυσος) being applied with contempt to the handicraftsman. Agriculture was held in somewhat higher esteem because troops of slaves did the menial work. But the gospel went first to the cities, and had to face the problem of the "workingmen." Was the Christian freeman to demean himself by work? (1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:10, 12. For Paul's own practice see 1 Cor. 9:6-19; 2 Thess 3:7-9.) Christianity came with a healthy tonic of work to a world which was wearing out in idleness and stupid pride.

4. In spite of their belief in the speedy coming of Christ the believers took the present life earnestly. The Kingdom of God was not merely a future event (Rom. 14:17-19). Strange as it may appear moral intuitions, ethical principles and concrete righteousness in everyday life were strongest just in that community of people who were most otherworldly (1 Thess. 5:1-11). The dynamic of Christian love wrought the Christian teaching of divine sonship into a domestic life of great originality, comprehensiveness and charm. To-day the worth of Christianity is still to be gauged by its power, not by its theory. What is its dynamic in my own life and in that of the world?

Study 9: The Christian in Public Life

First Day: Christianity Becomes an Illicit Religion

1. We have already seen that the Christian was subjected to much distress because of the fact that as in other ancient religions there was also in that of the Roman Empire a large political factor. No good patriot could abjure the religion of the state. But the case was peculiarly aggravated for the Christian because the emperors were supposed to be incarnations of the spirit of the empire, and divine honors were paid to the hero-genius of imperial Rome during his lifetime, and after his death he was consecrated with celestial dignity. Such a system was bound to demoralize both the subjects who paid and the monarchs who received this homage. Barring this essential demand of worship of the emperor, there was an easy-going toleration of any and every superstition or cult that each tribe or petty nation brought with it into the imperial system. Many thought that the same god was worshiped under these different forms, and therefore that one was as good as another.

2. There was, however, one remarkable exception. The alien Jew lived apart in his own tribes throughout the cities of the empire, and enjoyed exemption from conformity to state idolatry. For some years the Christian was regarded as a Jew and shared in this exemption. Indeed he was first persecuted by the Jew and looked to the Roman to protect him from men of his own race (Acts 18:12-17). The powers that be are a restraint upon lawlessness (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17). But a change came ere long, and was accelerated by the fall of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. It was manifest that the Christians were distinct from the Jews, and that unlike them they were not a nation, but a "new, and wicked, and vain superstition." So they received no privileges. Unprotected by any national breastwork they were like a dangerous island shoal of hateful human drift exposed to the sweep of the empire's outraged patriotism. In 1 Peter 4:16; 5:9, we can feel the ground-swell of the coming storm, and in Revelation it has broken in all its fury. Again and again through the early centuries imperial persecution thundered upon this island in the ocean of paganism, but it merely cast the beach higher, and made a protection which its waves could not pass. (See Lecky; Westcott's "Epistles of St. John," Essay, "The Two Empires.")

Study 9: The Christian in Public Life

Second Day: Difficulties for the Christian Patriot

1. The Christian religion separated patriotism from religion for the first time. Homage paid to an emperor is one thing; homage paid to God is another. The state has a right to demand the one; it has no right to interfere with the other. At the same time the Christian did not cease to be a citizen. Undoubtedly the belief that the world would soon pass away blunted the edge of his earthly patriotism, but he still had his duties to perform to ordered government. Now when we consider the trials to which he was exposed, it will appear that it was an immense accomplishment that he should have remained loyal. There was much of course that he could admire, especially in the government of the provinces, for it was on the whole a stable power making for order. But Rome came also to be an incarnation of the world spirit, the deification of force, an idolatrous perversion of government, which entailed vast suffering upon the brethren. Yet they prayed for the emperor and continued to pray for him in their daily service even while the fiercest persecutions were raging. Did ever any oppressed people show such discrimination and such magnificent ethical restraint? What finer exhibition is there of the power of love than this practice? They knew of course that they belonged to another empire, eternal and universal. In the present they were nominal citizens. In the other their names are truly written. They were an empire within an empire, recognized soon as a "third class."

2. The imperial idolatry like a subtle poison defiled almost every department of public life. Take the military system. The old Roman virtues had been of that patriotic order which is encouraged by the profession of arms. It might seem at first sight strange that the brethren whose gospel was in its essence love should be found in the army. But many of the officers and soldiers were Christian (Acts 10: 1; Phil. 1:13), and they would be peculiarly heroic because their confession would often bring them into direct collision with the idolatrous worship of the emperors, as its emblems appeared on the standards and otherwise. Yet the Christian is never urged to withdraw from the army. This is his field for self-discipline and victory.

Study 9: The Christian in Public Life

Third Day: Temptations in Business and Social Life

1. Many of the hardest temptations of the average Christian arose from his being called upon not to flee from idolatry, but to face it, for it met him everywhere. He did business as before, but his trade was affected by it, several occupations being dependent on temple worship, the practice of magic, or heathen rites. We have early proof of such interference in Acts 19:23-41. Various arts of life must have occasioned scruples of conscience to those who when they became Christians had to earn a livelihood at their old trade. Early Christian art in the Catacombs shows how with the growing years painters and sculptors of no mean order consecrated their brush or chisel to Christian service, the new spirit gradually transforming the old pagan devices, blotting out unworthy forms, and creating fresh designs with Christian symbolism.

2. In the pursuit of ordinary business the Christian was liable to be brought into the law courts. The Jews had been granted special tribunals of their own, before which they could come to terms with a fellow Jew, but no such privilege of course was enjoyed by adherents of an illicit religion. Unbelievers took advantage of the Christian's passivity to drag him into public on false charges, and the spirit in which this is to be endured is given in 1 Peter 4:15, 16. Scandals, however, arose when under the old habit of litigation brother went to law with brother before a heathen judge (1 Cor. 6:5-7). Doubtless the words of Jesus (Matt. 5:38ff., 18:15-20) set the standard in such matters.

3. A graver source of danger lay in the social intercourse of the believer with his former associates. The cities of Asia Minor and Greece were full of clubs for every conceivable purpose, religion, commerce, social enjoyment, and burial. To cut one's self off from club life was to cease to be a citizen of the world, and to the blithe Greek that was a serious matter. There were two perils connected with it. Idolatry was entrenched in this social custom as in a fastness. The club house was often an idol temple and the scene of such revellings as those of 1 Peter 4:3, 4. Hence Paul forbids Christians to share in these feasts (1 Cor. 10:1-22), and enjoins them to find their fellowship in the society of the brethren, where chaste love reigns (cf. Rev. 2:13, 14). As to eating meat exposed in the markets after it had been offered to idols, Paul says that the law of love must be the standard here also (1 Cor. 8:1-13).

Study 9: The Christian in Public Life

Fourth Day: The Victory over the Passion for the Games

1. Nowhere did the new religion face heavier odds than when it met the fierce passion of the populace for games and gladiatorial shows. And yet we have hardly a trace of it in the New Testament; not because the struggle was not keen, for the people of Rome were shouting, *panem et circenses.* The thirst for blood grew so fast by what it fed upon, that even in the first century it could be slaked only by an unceasing stream from animals and men. By the thousands they came to their death, while Rome in all her social ranks kept holiday in the great Colosseum, which gave shelter under silken canopies to over fifty thousand spectators. The earth was scoured for the lions, bears and elephants wherewith variety might be added to the carnage, for the viler the games, the bloodier and more refinedly shocking the deaths, the greater the zest not only of coarse slaves, but of aristocratic ladies. The emperors gave the people what they craved, but they ruined the manhood of the empire, for this horrid cruelty soon spread from Rome to the provinces. Some voices it is true were raised in protest against the gladiatorial combats, but they were of no avail, and the fact that edicts of emperors were ineffectual to cope with the evil finally till the reign of Honorius, A. D. 404, shows how the populace were absorbed in this passion.

2. Silently and with immense moral suasion the gospel draws the brethren away from the amphitheatre one by one, and as each turns from a scene which he must quit forever, it protects him with a shield of holier fellowship. Life is worth too much to God to be cruelly shed in order to satisfy a multitude. Christ has died for the slave and the barbarian gladiator. Even the dumb animals are a part of the creation which is to share in the blessings of redemption (Rom. 8: 18-22).

3. "These games display more vividly than any mere philosophical disquisition the abyss of depravity into which it is possible for human nature to sink. They furnish us with striking proofs of the reality of the moral progress we have attained, and they enable us in some degree to estimate the regenerating influence that Christianity has exercised in the world. For the destruction of the gladiatorial games is all its work. Philosophers indeed might deplore them, gentle natures might shrink from their contagion, but to the multitude they possessed a fascination which nothing but the new religion could overcome." (Lecky, I., 282; see also Lanciani's "Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome," 369-374.)

Study 9: The Christian in Public Life

Fifth Day: A True and a False Isolation

1. Christianity met this craving for amusement by a stern call to higher work. The gospel has a strenuous ideal (Luke 14:26ff.). Religious enthusiasm, even speaking with tongues, counts for little without the works of love (Matt. 13:20, 21; Luke 13:23-27; 1 Cor. 14:12). There was no place for drones in a community whose duty was urgent to preach the gospel (2 Thess. 3:6-15). This heightening of the value of life and of time was an immense moral advance in an empire where only the slave toiled. Christianity allied herself with the needy and with unpopular causes, when the road to life lay that way. She showed a heroic indifference to clamor, a "splendid isolation." Like their Master the disciples refused to bow down and worship Satan in order to win the world. In the long run it is just by this course that true victories over the world are still gained.

2. There were also subtle intellectual tendencies which threatened the ethical standard and endangered the spiritual life of the brethren. That world had its intellectual cliques with initiation into mysteries and esoteric doctrines, and many wished to make the gospel another "mystery," the more abstruse doctrines being of such a nature that the common man would take no interest in them. In the second century these intellectual aristocrats separated themselves outwardly from the Christian Church and formed the schools of the "Gnostics," some of them pure in their morals, others ascetic, others gravely licentious, but all claiming a superior knowledge of the truth. That these schools desired to be called Christian is a high tribute to the impression that the gospel had made upon the world. Fundamentally these systems were corrupt. They left no room for ethical endeavor, for redemption from sin, or the Christian conception of God. They were not truly Christian. If Gnosticism had fastened itself on Christianity it would have destroyed it. It was a parasite and had to be torn off. For its beginnings see Eph. 4:14; Col. 2:8, 18; 1 John 2:18, 19, 22; 4:2, 3; 5:6.

Study 9: The Christian in Public Life

Sixth Day: The Failure of the Philosopher to Appreciate Christianity

1. It must ever remain a sorry comment on philosophy that during the first two centuries its best representatives were at such small pains to learn what this new religion meant, and treated with contempt or worse a body of people in whose moral endeavors they should have discerned some affinity with their own ideals. Epictetus, Pliny, Marcus Aurelius, Lucian, even the physician Galen, most sympathetic of all, cannot understand Christianity. If it is not entirely fanaticism, what is it? They cannot deny that there is an irreducible surd somewhere at its heart. Pliny and Galen testify to the high moral quality of the lives of the brethren, their self-sacrifice, their purity, their honor and their bravery in the face of death. But in spite of this without temple, ritual or national God, Christianity is for them an unreasonable atheism. They never came close enough to understand this "third class," this *imperium in imperio,* which on their own confession was draining away the life from their heathen temples. (See Heinrici, "Das Urchristenthum.") The reason of their failure was that those philosophers did not value the facts and ideals which were primary in Christianity. Almost every man of them accommodated himself more or less in practice to the morals and superstitions of the time, since they were in his view part of the necessary environment of the life of the common people. He knew their worth and was not led astray, but either his knowledge was too speculative, or it seemed to him to have in it too little power to reform popular manners. He acquiesced in the conduct of the world and spun fancies of better things.

2. Unfortunately there has been at times since then only too good reason for bringing a similar complaint against the intellectual world. The educated man often tends to look upon life as a curious object for investigation. He does not always collect more facts than are necessary to frame an hypothesis. But does he always put the proper value on the facts of life? Does he give sufficient credit to the immense latent power on the religious and moral side of human nature? So we ask the college man, What is the worth of your ideals? Do they get down to and inspire the work-a-day world of common men?

Study 9: The Christian in Public Life

Seventh Day: Review and Problem

1. We may review the situation and state our problem. Christianity enters the world at a time when there was a revival of religious interest, but little to satisfy that interest, a world that was morally depraved to an unprecedented degree, and yet a world in which many noble ideals of humanity lay unproductive in many minds. Impotent pathos stood over against ascetism. Suddenly the gospel is preached, and its followers are not unreasonably identified by the Gentile world with Judaism. But Judaism did not supply the new energy, for it had been ineffective itself in moulding the morals of that world to higher ends. Christianity is recruited from the intelligent middle classes, with a large number of slaves and outcasts, and a sprinkling from the highest ranks. But it offers no better terms to the rich than to the poor, to the intellectual than to the unlettered. Its ethical demand is from the beginning utterly stringent. To face a world given over to lust with an inviolable law of purity is even to-day regarded by some as visionary; to fight the luxury of that world and its mammonism with such a finely tempered weapon as the gentle Christian spirit might have seemed to court defeat from a coarse and ostentatious age; to dare to resist point blank the passion for lustful amusement and bloody games was in the view of common sense the height of folly; to cut right across the social strata and establish a brotherhood upon moral and spiritual affinities without casting everyday relationships into confusion, and to exalt labor to a place of dignity, was to show wonderful powers of organization. And the total result was a stupendous moral creation. Even had the effort been short-lived, what finer flowering of virtue has there ever been? But the dynamic did not spend its force with the passing of the first generation. The second century was no more afraid of spiritual venture than the first, and the Christian ideal spread over the world. Whence came this new standard of conduct and its results in moral heroism? Why were Judaism with its prestige of religion and its imperial privileges, Stoicism intellectually and socially well advantaged, and all other ritual and religious systems, so ineffective in grappling with their present distress? The Christians had learned what life is—its worth, its sin, its possibility of renewal. Whence came that knowledge? They said that these things had come home to them when the good news of God in Jesus Christ had been preached to them (Rom. 1:14-17).

Study 10: Great Personalities

First Day: Impressive Characters Appear in this Brotherhood During a Sterile Age

1. Any religion or society is to be judged by the greatness of the men whom it produces. Until these arise to gather up in themselves the ideas that are in the air, to give emphasis to the winged words charged with the live issues that flit from lip to lip, and to embody the answer to the longings and hopes of the multitude, the movement does not get shape. They understand the force of its conceptions. In their words, gesture, energy, and character the idea has its clothing. Its power is to be measured by the conviction which those into whose life it is inwrought can inspire in others as to its worth.

2. Nothing is more characteristic of the living power of Christianity than that it has thrown up time and again all down its history, out of the depths of the society, some man of immense spiritual force, who, owing little or nothing to adventitious conditions such as birth or breeding, dominates the world with spiritual ideals, and renews its religious convictions. Christianity like a belt of light across the heavens has been studded with bright stars in every age, though there are peculiarly brilliant clusters at different periods, as in the early centuries, the reformation epoch, and the century that has just closed. But it was from the brightest of these clusters that the Church started on her way across our era. No age affords so many examples of high character and noble endeavor as the apostolic period.

3. They are not to be accounted for by the historical and moral conditions of the time, for if we except John the Baptist, Judaism had produced no prophet for centuries, and the revival of religious ideals in the apostles was beyond anything even in the most classic days of prophecy. And Hebrew prophecy itself has to be explained. "In all the religious history of mankind there is nothing that can be compared to the prophetic order in Israel" (A. B. Davidson). Nor was contemporary paganism more productive of great characters. Out of a period stretching over a century and a half we can select a Plutarch, a Seneca, an Epictetus, or a Marcus Aurelius; these are the best examples of an age smitten with moral decrepitude. Paganism had not the vital force to beget spiritual offspring.

Study 10: Great Personalities

Second Day: Jesus Elicits Unshaken Loyalty in Men of Heroic Mould

1. In the men of the apostolic period there is, as we shall see, a wide range of character, but a common feature is their overwhelming energy. They threw themselves into their mission with unflinching courage. It is difficult for us to estimate correctly the moral heroism of the first disciples of Jesus. They may not have had great worldly prospects, but they abandoned all they had (Matt. 19:27ff.). Doubtless they expected some return (Mark 10:35-37), even in the present, though the fact that they clung to their Master as they saw that they were to be disappointed should relieve them of a suspicion of having followed Him from unworthy motives. Consider the demands of discipleship (Luke 14:26). It was sufficiently exacting during the year of popularity in Galilee, but after they learned of His coming death their hopes must have suffered collapse. There is something pitiful if it were not heroic in the scene in Gethsemane (Luke 22:49-51). Here is a handful of men who have thrown over their patriotism and their religious traditions for the sake of One who they had hoped would be the Messiah, and He is to die and leave them to the hatred of their own people. Even at this moment they obey Jesus though they still see a chance of cutting their way through their enemies and escaping among the olive trees. They must have been men of wonderful spiritual penetration, and Christ must have inspired them with supreme love, when their loyalty was tenacious amidst this wreck of their lives.

2. But this devotion to Jesus is no less constant through the reverses and disappointments of the following decades. And these men were no ordinary characters; they have become the spiritual guides of the world. Yet they glory in calling themselves slaves of Jesus Christ. They were so absorbed in the pursuit of the unseen kingdom which He preached that they flung themselves upon danger. A throbbing love to Christ drives them through every wave of opposition. There is no saving of their own lives, no selfishness, no grudging labor, no careful balancing of accounts, no weariness of the toil, no claim of merit, nothing of hireling service. Those first missionaries of the gospel are almost prodigal of all they have, for the best they can give is too little for their Master (2 Cor. 5:14). The nobler the character and the more varied the endowments of these men, the more glorious must have been the Figure who constrained their loyalty.

Study 10: Great Personalities

THIRD DAY: STEPHEN AND BARNABAS

1. We shall consider some of the leading characters of the New Testament. *Stephen,* the first martyr, was unquestionably one of the most powerful factors in the development of primitive Christianity, for, though his influence on Paul has sometimes been overestimated, he was the first to see that if the message of the gospel should be confined within old Jewish customs, the new wine would burst the old bottles. His greatness is displayed both by his insight (Acts 7) and his readiness for heroic measures (Acts 6:8, 11, 13, 14). Jew as he was, he rose above the limitations of his race, and reading as no one yet had done the purpose of God's revelation to the world, he tells his hearers that the work of the Jewish nation as such is done (7:51-53). They must give way to the new Israel. The earthly temple, its ritual, and the legal customs are to be displaced by a wider Temple of God in the hearts of men. Stephen was the most winsome man of the brotherhood (Acts 6: 3, 8). Conspicuous for wisdom and for faith, he could adjust delicate issues. Prudent and devout, his courage flowed like a steady stream, never breaking over shallows. His days were few upon the earth, but his character was one of the choicest fruits of the Spirit, for none perhaps had so much of the mind of Jesus (Acts 7:60).

2. *Barnabas* was also a glory to that early group. Though he belonged to a priestly family (Acts 4:36) he triumphed over his class prejudices, and was one of the first to associate himself with the mission to the Gentiles. A man of substance he was an example of liberality, and did not scorn to work with his own hands for a living (1 Cor. 9: 6). Unlike Paul he seems never to have been regarded as a party man, but retained the confidence of the older wing of the Church (Acts 9:27; Gal. 2:1ff.). Not less creditable to his character was his willingness to be subordinate to Paul, though he had been an older disciple, and had done much to pave the way for the former persecutor on his entrance into the Church. He had his failings it is true (Acts 15:37-39), but Paul pays him a high tribute in the words, "*even* Barnabas" (Gal. 2:13).

Study 10: Great Personalities

FOURTH DAY: JAMES AND PETER

1. *James* was the head of the conservative element in the Church, and seems to have clung more to his Jewish upbringing than any of the early leaders. Living in Jerusalem he was a stranger to the world outside Jewry of the Palestinian order. He was afraid of the Gentiles and of their contaminating customs (Acts 15:13ff.; Gal. 2:12), and was suspicious of progress. He seems to have been slow to grasp the full reach of a principle, or even to read character (Mark 3:31; John 7:5), but he was devotedly loyal to the past in which God had been gracious unto him, and was reluctant to move beyond it. He nevertheless allowed the facts of God's grace to lead him. Steadfastly anchored to his old religious life he was yet more true to God and to Jesus as Messiah, and under the recital of the facts of Paul's missionary success among the Gentiles, he swung round to a position from which he could reach out to them the right hand of fellowship and wish them Godspeed on their journey. It was a power outside Judaism which led James to do this (Gal. 2:9ff.).

2. In *Peter* we first meet the leader of primitive Christianity. He was a man of action, masterful and impulsive, and became a representative not only among the Jewish Christians, but also in the Gentile churches (1 Peter 1:1). Sensitive to his surroundings he seems often to have taken steps before he realized the practical consequences of his decision, and he hesitated to carry them at once to their logical conclusions, as Paul with his ruthless logical consistency would do (Gal. 2:11-16). He had a buoyant and generous nature, fearless, dictatorial, hot withal against impurity (1 Peter 4 and 5), and devoted to his Master in spite of lapses (Mark 14:29). He was the first to make open confession of Jesus as Messiah, and his gospel which underlies Mark gave the type to the preaching of the life of Jesus of Nazareth (Mark 8:29). Neither profound nor imaginative, Peter became a man of rock-like nature. This seems to have been the impression of him that remained in the Church (Matt 16:18; Luke 22:32), no less than that he owed his strength to Jesus Christ (Acts 3:12).

Study 10: Great Personalities

FIFTH DAY: JOHN: BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION OF APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

1. *John* does not occupy a large place in the recorded history of the early Church if we omit the Johannine writings, which for our purpose we may not assume to be his. But he was one of the most intimate circle of Jesus, and along with Peter comes to the front after Pentecost (Acts 3:1ff.; 4:13, 19; 8:14). Whatever verdict is passed upon the authorship of the fourth gospel, we may infer that John the apostle presented in his preaching a different side of the character of Jesus from Peter's view. He was probably a mystic, intense in his loves and hates. His nature was deep, and we may suppose that he was more responsive than any other disciple to the profoundest truths in the mind of his Master.

2. None of these men would have attained immortal fame apart from the gospel which they served. It was their privilege and their response to their opportunity that made them what they became. The apostle was a man who made no claims for himself; he was simply a transmitter of the word of Jesus to the world (Mark 3:14, 15; 1 Cor. 3:5-11). Would these men have seized upon their own countrymen's imagination for their saintliness? Are there not to-day multitudes whose character is the equal of theirs? James was narrow, Peter dangerously impulsive, neither of them possessing the finely balanced mind which the Greek moralists taught to be the sign of the perfect man. With the exception of Stephen all seem to have lost at some time their moral footing. They impressed the world because of the message they brought. A marvelous Person behind them is the only explanation of their influence (Acts 4:13). The steel of their character had been tempered to the finest issues in His presence. They had bathed their swords in heaven.

3. The apostolic age, however, presents not only a few super-eminent peaks arising out of the depths, but a whole plateau of elevated character and endowment. Prophecy, which had been so long dormant, awoke again to life (Matt. 10:41; Acts 11:27; 15:32; 1 Cor. 12:28; 14:29ff.; Eph. 2:20; 4:11; Rev. 10:7; 22:6, 9). There were many men richly endowed with the Spirit of God, not an official class, who proclaimed to the Church the truth of the gospel. They spoke in the name of Jesus and claimed a divine revelation. Had they really a word from the living God? If not how are they to be accounted for? To deny that they had is simply to deny a fundamental assumption of the New Testament.

Study 10: Great Personalities

Sixth Day: Paul; His Training, Work and Character

1. *Paul* stands by himself. Not only had he transcendent genius, and the best educational advantages, but he had a vision of the risen Jesus which put his apostleship in a different order from that of those who had been with Jesus on earth. His training at Tarsus gave him insight into the Greek mind; he was a favorite pupil of the Pharisees (Gal. 1:13, 14; Acts 9:1-9), and his Roman citizenship made him an imperialist in thought (Rom. 1:14-16). He was thus fitted more than any other individual to put his stamp upon Christianity. He has the breadth of the educated man, and the outlook of a man of the world.

2. His commanding personality is shown by his work, his claim being that his churches are his certificate when he is traduced (2 Cor. 3:2, 3), for no man was ever more persistently slandered (Gal. 1:10; 6:10-17; 2 Cor. 10:11, 12). His authority was acknowledged by the churches in the most important cities of the empire, with which he maintained an extensive correspondence. These letters, often written almost as fugitive instructions, are in the matter of intellectual power among the world's great literature, and his skill in dialectic and clear exposition, as seen, *e. g.*, in Romans, is of the highest order.

3. But he was no less distinguished for his sanity in commonplace affairs. Where is there a better poised judgment than that which delivered the advice contained in the first epistle to the Corinthians? His principles are of the highest, but he knows character and can make allowance for weakness and difference in circumstances (1 Cor. 7:8). He puts his finger with candor and remarkable precision on the spot where the ailment is rooted, and as successfully chooses the remedy (1 Cor. 11:17-34; 12:30, 31). He is a calm, shrewd man guided by a rigid standard of righteousness (Rom. 3:5-8; 6:12-18). Indeed he has been the teacher of the most virile portion of the Christian Church. Is not this because he is the apostle of freedom, and of faith in Christ and His truth? The creator under God of Gentile Christianity, one who produced a moral reformation, the effects of which reach even to the present, a man in whom vast intellectual power and sane judgment were so eminently combined is surely able to give satisfactory testimony as to the controlling forces of his life and their source. What is his account of his life? (Gal. 1:11—2:21.)

Study 10: Great Personalities

Seventh Day: Paul a Miracle of Divine Grace

1. Fortunately we have in an unquestioned epistle a bit of autobiography by Paul on the crisis of his life (Gal. 1:13-17). This passage along with 1 Cor. 15:8; Rom. 1:4 makes plain to us that Jesus the risen Messiah appeared to him while he was in the full course of his career of persecution, convinced him that hitherto his eyes had been blinded to the truth, and revealed Himself in him as the Son of God. This event explains all his subsequent life. Every action and thought springs from his conviction of the grace of God towards him, unworthy to be an apostle (1 Cor. 15:9, 10; Eph. 3:8).

2. This express testimony cannot be invalidated by a theory that the apostle suffered from hallucination (2 Cor. 12:1-12), for he always distinguishes between these and his first sight of Jesus. This latter event was the one breach in his career, up towards which there were no approaches from misgiving lest he might be fighting against God. His letters show no threads running through his earlier experience in Judaism which were lying ready to be combined by a vision into the new Christian experience. But were even his visions (2 Cor. 12) nothing but subjective trances? If so it means that his belief that he received truth from another world was due to the physical reaction from an overwrought emotion. But before coming to this conclusion we must remember the immense moral forces which he brought into play and controlled. Is spiritual intoxication sufficient to account for these unsurpassed results in life? If so our best things are based on hallucination.

3. Further Paul is not a fanatic swayed by a theory. He does not write about systems and doctrines in the abstract, but about a living Person. Jesus Christ entered into his life on a certain day (Gal. 1:16), and henceforth the apostle was possessed by an overmastering passion for his Lord. Men do not make mistakes about these ethical crises that are traced to the appearance of a person who became a steadfast friend, and by whose influence they have been saved from ruin. A lover does not err as to whether he knows his beloved. And Paul loved Jesus with absorbing passion (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:35; 2 Cor. 5:14).

4. Paul cannot be explained by his education and environment. He impressed the world in spite of his Judaism. Indeed he is often said to be discredited to-day because we are supposed to have outgrown his Jewish doctrines. But it is precisely in that which is non-Jewish in him that his power resides. His enthusiastic witness to the fact that Jesus is the crucified and living Christ—the very antithesis of his Jewish conceptions—has persuaded the world, for from this preaching flowed a moral renewal. Paul repudiates glory for himself. His churches and their character are the fruit of the Christ who lives in him (1 Cor. 1:23-25; 2 Cor. 2:14-17; 4:5, 7-18).

Study 11: The Christian Literature—The New Testament

First Day: Contemporary Jewish Writings Lack Creative Power

1. Great literature is always the outcome of the powerful emotions, convictions, and enthusiasms of life. A sceptical age cannot produce books to charm the world, for men are on the whole healthy-minded and trust rather than disbelieve. Now the New Testament belongs pre-eminently to an age of faith. It is pervaded by one and the same spirit, and is in all its varied character and literary forms expressive of a unique and strong life. The New Testament is one book because it deals with phases of the selfsame life.

2. As far as literature is concerned the epoch was barren. There had been no great ideas stirring to kindle the imagination, and the New Testament stands by itself in the century which it covers. To take the writings which in form most nearly approach the New Testament—the contemporary literature of the Jews. This is somewhat voluminous. Leaving out of account the Old Testament Apocrypha, the best writings belong to the class entitled "pseudepigraphic," consisting for the most part of apocalypses bearing the names of Old Testament worthies—the Book of Enoch, the Ascension of Isaiah, the Assumption of Moses, the Apocalypse of Baruch. They are composed of visions and medleys of fancy wrought into shape as protests against the existing order of things, reflections of national ideals cast upon the clouds of a stormy present. It is a topsy-turvy world in which the sanity of true literature is sacrificed to the dreams of the enthusiast. The average Jewish apocalypse is ineffective. In contrast to these our canonical apocalypse, though often incongruous and full of unintelligible imagery, is instinct with and capable of producing a mighty faith. A passion, a volume of belief, a wave of confidence surges through the book, bearing forward its strange figures, imagery and visions to a crest, but leaving them behind as it rolls on and breaks with magnificence on the shores of the eternal world (Rev. 21 and 22).

3. The Psalms of the Pharisees or Solomon (50 B. C.?) are the finest of contemporary Jewish literature, suggestive in many ways of the hymns of Mary and Zacharias (Luke 1:47-55, 67-79), though they lack their buoyant and prophetic spirit. But of all Jewish writings of that time it may be said that they are devoid of creative or prophetic genius. They smell of the lamp, or have the tone of the ecclesiastic or disappointed nationalist. Hardly any would be read with interest were it not for the light they throw on the world from which the New Testament sprang.

Study 11: The New Testament

Second Day: Thrown into Relief by Succeeding Writings

1. A comparison of the New Testament with contemporary or succeeding Christian writings heightens the impression of its uniqueness. These are easily recognized to be derivative, indeed the best of them are frankly so. Any reader of the apocryphal gospels, acts, or epistles finds himself ushered into a very rarified atmosphere, which could hardly sustain high-toned religious life. In them are thrown together things of value and things of trivial character side by side. They suffer from want of power to discriminate between what is congruous and what is singularly inappropriate in persons whose names in the New Testament stand for something of altogether different grade. They have small sense of spiritual truth.

2. There are men of distinctly larger caliber on the borderland of the apostolic period, where a few of the great figures of the first age still linger among their successors. But a decline is manifest even here. Clement lacks the prophetic fire of James; Ignatius is fervid and lovable, but his intellectual grip is feebler and his spiritual insight less discerning than that of the New Testament writers; and the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles reveals the process of the purer teaching of the perfect law of liberty changing into a legalistic standard. The best explanation of this is that none of these writers came into direct touch with Jesus Christ and the creative agencies which were at work in the circle of His immediate disciples. The personal glow is lessening because the Jesus of history is represented now by but few of those who knew Him.

> "If I live yet, it is for good, more love
> Through me to men: be nought but ashes here
> That keep awhile my semblance, who was John—
> Still, when they scatter, there is left on earth
> No one alive who knew (consider this.)
> —Saw with his eyes and handled with his hands
> That which was from the first, the Word of Life.
> How will it be when none more saith 'I saw'?"
>
> —*R. Browning. A Death in the Desert.*

The consciousness of the New Testament revelation is expressed in Gal. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:8, 9; 1 Thess. 4:15; John 1:14; 1 John 1:1-4; Rev. 22:18, 19.

3. The quality of the Christian Fathers of the second, third and fourth centuries seems to be purer than that of the sub-apostolic age, but they all profess to be merely interpreters of the New Testament, and not even secondary sources of revelation. The canonical Scriptures are like an oasis in the wilderness. Suddenly the traveler comes upon them after having wandered through tracts of barrenness, and in the centuries that follow the green spots of spiritual genius are spread along the water courses which have issued from this spring of life.

Study 11: The New Testament

Third Day: The Style and Language of the New Testament

1. There is very little literary grace in the New Testament. Some of the writers, notably the author of Hebrews, were men of culture, but the average style lacks æsthetic distinction, such as belongs to masters of the silver age of Greek like Polybius or Plutarch. Paul, it is true, was a man of the highest education, but he gave small heed to form. In his eagerness he presses forward till he breaks through his language and his thought becomes abrupt (2 Cor. 12:1-9; Gal. 1:6-9; 2:3-10). His message not his style, except in so far as the style is the man, gained the attention of his readers, though the cultured Athenians found his enthusiasm to be excessive, and put him aside as bad form (Acts 17:32). These words are true of the gospel of John—"We must not apply æsthetic standards to religious literature, but from the peculiar charm of the measured wave-like movement of the sentences, which give an impression of the divine character of Jesus, so clear and deep, so simple and exalted, so still and so powerful, so solemn and so smooth, so enigmatical and so self-evident, no one can escape who seeks for Christ in the gospel" (Heinrici).

2. This drives us down to the heart of the matter. The New Testament is a product of the everyday speech of the people, being composed in what is called "the common dialect," and that as spoken by the common folk rather than as written by the cultured. But this language, though of vulgar origin, moves with dignity, its spirit is high born, and it carries its everyday and simple garb with noble bearing. A few words were coined, but the real change is in the spirit with which the old terms were invested, words once ignoble or pedestrian, *e. g.*, "cross," "minister," "church," "gospel," being exalted to celestial significance; while, as we have seen, several of the Christian virtues had to be provided with nomenclature. "The vitality of the New Testament language resides in the spirit that quickens it. It is as pervasive as the atmosphere, but as intangible as a perfume" (J. H. Thayer).

3. This phenomenon is worth pondering. The instrument for the transmission of divine truth is not the language of the cultured, nor of the subtle philosopher; it is just average speech, commonplace expression, which any one may understand. A grammarian may be shocked at its errors, a rhetorician at the graceless style, but like the dull carbon when aglow with electric light, this New Testament speech illuminated by the Divine Spirit has shed forth truth upon the world. (See Deissmann's "Bible Studies"; J. H. Thayer's article, "Language of New Testament" in Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible"; J. H. Moulton's articles on "Characteristics of New Testament Greek" in the "Expositor" for 1904.)

Study 11: The New Testament

Fourth Day: Jewish Books Become the Religious Classics of the Gentiles

1. These books are Jewish in spirit and form. How is it that Jesus has become the Teacher of mankind though He couched so much of His discourse in provincial Jewish language? How is it that sparks of truth shot off in heated controversy with the Pharisees, and expressed in terms of the Jewish theocratic ideal, are the vehicle of revelation to the world? Because that comparatively sequestered nation had sent forth a stream of the noblest teachers in matters that pertain to God and the soul. To the Jew belonged the spiritual intelligence necessary to fathom the gospel and to interpret it to the world, and he alone had a sufficiently endowed character to be a competent messenger concerning the Kingdom of Jesus.

2. But the Jewish people of that age had been saddled with the Pharisees, who as self-constituted pedagogues had ridden them into a hard slavery. Therefore Jesus had first to unseat these pedagogues, relieve the Israelite of his burden, and call to his memory the well-nigh forgotten truths of the prophets on which Hebrew character had been moulded. This is the reason of so much discussion in the gospels. Only thus could Jesus bring to light the great hidden truths of the past and show how they were carried to completion in His message.

3. On turning to the epistles one might fancy at first sight that they could not be attractive to the Gentiles. Romans might be thought to require a Jewish constituency, and Hebrews even more so. Their long and subtle arguments derive their cogency from their contrasts with Jewish theology, practice, or ritual. Their authors appeal boldly to the Jewish Scriptures without having recourse to the allegory of Philo in order to adapt them to the cultured Gentile world. Then what of the imagery of the Apocalypse? And yet in spite of their difficulties they have become the standard religious literature of the progressive nations of the world; and not of the Western world alone, for the immense and growing work of the Bible societies proves that the Scriptures are displacing other sacred books where they enter into competition with them. How is this to be explained?

Study 11: The New Testament

Fifth Day: Jesus Christ the Unity of the New Testament

1. The unity of the New Testament is explained by the purpose which traverses it from beginning to end, though it is surprising that that purpose should have been so consistently maintained in a literature which grew as it did. In the case of the gospels it is obvious that they were all written with a definite purpose, which from various points of view is the same—to set forth the historical facts of Christ's life in such a manner as to show that no other foundation can any man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus. An actual life, the materials of which two writers claim to have verified (Luke 1:1-4; John 1:14-18; 19:35; 21:24), forms the source of the rest of the New Testament. These gospels were written not as literary biography, but to edify (Mark 1:1; Matt. 1:21-23; Luke 1:4; John 20:31). Each writer believed that Christ, and He alone, was the Gospel.

2. Many of the epistles on the other hand were put forth to meet the current necessities of the Church (1 Cor.; 2 Cor.; Gal., see especially 6:11-18; and 3 John), and we have only a selection from a large correspondence. But they are all an application of the principles of Christ's life to the everyday needs of the believer. As a whole the Acts and epistles are an interpretation of the Person of Christ whom His followers were learning to know more deeply through experience. "It was by something more divine than a sure instinct that the interpretation of Christ's Person was made to occupy a larger space in the New Testament than even the words of Jesus. It is the faith which the book embodies more than the facts it states that has placed upon its brow the crown of its illuminative history" (Fairbairn).

3. So the unity of the New Testament consists in its picture of Jesus Christ. The writers claim that they can describe this Person. Some assert that they had lived with Him on earth, or had had a vision of the risen Christ, and that they knew His mind. Though His Spirit still lives and works in their midst it must be defined by the character of the historic Jesus (John 16:14; 2 Cor. 3:17). The purpose, origin, and unity of the New Testament are found in the Person of Jesus Christ. It is often a commonplace setting for a wonderful character, much of it having been written to give advice on humble duties, or to counteract mistaken notions of average Christians, but this casual literature has become the world's standard because of the marvelous Person it enshrines.

Study 11: The New Testament

Sixth Day: The New Testament Answers Man's Hardest Questions

1. But the question still remains, Why do these Jewish books which deal with the life and Person of the Messiah appeal to the heart of the world? As Coleridge said, the Scriptures "find" us, the same idea that they have a marvelous self-revealing power being expressed in Heb. 4:12, 13; 1 John 5:9-12. No honest soul can carefully study the New Testament without being morally quickened, spiritually uplifted and inspired with a new sense of the worth of life. Through it all there is an unmatched elevation. Much of this breaks forth from simplest words which need no explanation, but can be understood by the unlearned, though like pure and clear mountain lakes their depth is unfathomable. On the other hand many of the truths of the New Testament are so lofty that they seem like distant snow-clad peaks piercing the blue, whose reflection lies across these same mountain lakes, but they are inaccessible even to the most experienced climbers.

2. We do not take long to discover that we ourselves are the greatest riddle of life. What am I? Whither am I going? To these the most insistent questions of our nature the New Testament supplies the answer, We are made in the image of God and can find no rest but in Him (Matt. 5:48; 11:28, 29; John 14:1-6; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 4:9). The fundamental axiom of the Bible is that there is a God. Its revelation consists in the nature of the God of whom it teaches. Absolutely righteous, self-consistent, free from moods or envy, He is the all-wise, eternal Sovereign, loving mercy and hating iniquity, forgiving sin. The Holy Father is eager to receive the love of all His children.

3. As compared with the Old Testament the New Testament teaches a fuller idea of the Divine Nature. Holiness is no longer expressed in ritual, but in the purest ethical terms, some of the qualities with which Jehovah was thought to be endowed by writers of the Old Testament having disappeared in the fuller light of the New. It professes to fulfill the promise of the new covenant (Jer. 31:31ff.). God is no longer the God of the Jews, but the Father of mankind. Salvation is for the world (John 4:21-24).

Study 11: The New Testament

Seventh Day: The Optimism of the New Testament Based on Jesus Christ

1. Our next question is, What is man? Nowhere are the facts of human life faced with such sincerity as in the New Testament. Sin is painted as it really is. Man is dealt with as he is found, due heed being paid to the testimony of conscience and the lessons of remorse. The light of Christ's pure life streaming from the cross deepens the sense of human shame. Where is the hideousness of the sin in which the race is sunk depicted in such awful and yet self-restrained and discerning terms as in the New Testament? (Matt. 23; John 3:17-21; Rom. 3:9-20; Eph. 2:1-3; Heb. 2:14, 15; James 4:1-10; 1 Peter 4:17-19). "The human race," as Newman says, "is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity, and is out of joint with the purposes of its Creator." This has been called Christian pessimism.

2. Along with this there is an unexampled view of the noble inherent dignity of man, and at the same time strong confidence as to his future destiny (1 Cor. 15:20-28). Other literature is full of despondency as to human nature, but according to the New Testament the race gets a fresh start in Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:12-21; Eph. 2:10; 1 John 4:9). From Him flows a stream of pure life for the cleansing of depraved man and restoring him to the righteous Father. To these fundamental questions as to God, man and salvation there are no discrepant answers in the New Testament. The book is one in its spirit.

3. There is a tendency to-day among some critics to ascribe not only Hebrews, but all our gospels except Mark, and many of the chief epistles to unknown authors, or to schools of apostolic foundation. A real appreciation of the spiritual magnitude of these books renders this *prima facie* very unlikely. Was the turn of the first century so prolific in spiritual genius that the authors of these world classics should have been lost in the crowd? To point to the anonymity of Jewish literature does not meet the difficulty, for none of it is of first rate order. But it is especially insufficient as an answer because the writers of the New Testament lay such stress on testimony. Their gospel was bound up with the truth of certain facts concerning Jesus Christ. If the New Testament is derived from the apostles or their companions, and is due to the more or less direct inspiration of Jesus Christ whom they knew and loved, there is at least an adequate solution of the problem on its religious side.

PART II.

THE NEW TESTAMENT EXPLANATION OF THE FOREGOING PHENOMENA—THE APOSTOLIC GOSPEL

Study 12: The Gospel

First Day: The Phenomena and Their Wondrous Explanation

1. To recapitulate, we have been brought face to face with a marvelous ethical creation, a new type of character and life. Within the widely scattered and variously assorted Christian Brotherhood there arose an ideal transcending in its worth the purest dreams of prophets and sages, and that ideal was wrought out in the everyday life of multitudes drawn from every rank in society, and often from most untoward circumstances. Not only were humble lives beautified, but they were inspired by a conviction of the worth of the unseen which reversed for them the values placed by the ordinary man on the things of the world. Their richest blessings lay in the beyond. Moreover, new powers were at work in their midst, which they believed to come as spiritual gifts from their exalted Lord. It was a brotherhood of priests and prophets all in the enjoyment of the Holy Spirit, but there emerged from it a number of men of supreme endowments whose spiritual eminence gave them leadership. From the circle of the brethren there has also come a literature which is the classic source for the religious and moral ideals of the Western civilization.

2. How are we to account for this phenomenon? The explanation of the New Testament itself is that it was due to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This might be inferred from the position given to the narratives of the life of Jesus and their length, at the opening of the New Testament. But it is explicitly stated by Paul almost as a ringing challenge (1 Cor. 1:18-25; Gal. 3:1-5), and the epistles to the Hebrews (2:3, 4), of James (1:18), Peter (1 Peter 1:23-25), and John (1 John 1:7; 4:14) bear witness to the same effect. All agree that there is one and only one source of moral renewal, that no other gospel can compete with their message (Gal. 1:6ff.).

3. That gospel had a vitality which radium-like was not diminished by the moral energy it created. Doubtless its success was an immense confirmatory evidence of its universal truth to the first missionaries. But in itself their message was to them a constant wonder. They felt even more than we do that their words and the phenomena of their circle were a startling contrast to the ordinary happenings of life. They realized to the full the magnitude of the change that had come over the world, and they were prepared to accept responsibility for the stupendous explanation they gave of its cause. It is impossible to trace an increasing wonder fed by fancy across a chasm of years, beginning in the earlier books and growing as myths grow, till a simple human life is cast like the Brocken mirage in giant shape upon the clouds of the imagination. They knew that they were living in the midst of wonders transacted in a commonplace world. In its full daylight they gave one and the same self-consistent account of these marvels. But they stood almost aghast at the audacity of their explanation (Rom. 1:16, 17; 11:33-36; Heb. 1:1-4; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 1 John 3:1, 2).

Study 12: The Gospel

Second Day: The Living Word of Truth

1. The gospel is "the Word of God," which God Himself speaks. There has been but one Word from the beginning, though its meaning has only fully come in Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1). No commoner figure for the gospel is found than that of the seed (Matt. 13:3-23). This seed is germinant with the will of God for our salvation (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23-25). Carried by preachers to every part of the world the seed bears fruit, and waxing strong enables those who receive it to overcome the evil (Col. 1:6; 1 John 2:14).

2. It is a living word. As such it is in marked contrast to the written code of the old covenant, which like all mere systems of precepts grew antiquated (2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 3:21). Life exists only by adaptation to environment, or, perhaps we should say, by adapting through its inherent power its environment to its own uses, transmuting dead material into forms of organic existence. In like manner the gospel is not a dead written letter, but is an eternal truth that will fit itself into each individual's conditions and into the circumstances of every age (John 16:13).

3. As the word of God the gospel is "the truth" (1 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 10:26; James 1:18; 1 John 4:6). This is a wide term, covering all life; it is an ethical or spiritual idea, not primarily intellectual. The gospel is what God has to say on life in its complete range, and just because it helps men to attain unto the "more life and fuller" it is their salvation. It is the truth because God Himself who speaks it is the Light (1 John 1:5; Eph. 5:8, 9, 13).

4. Therefore the gospel is authoritative. Man's word may be a matter of opinion, shifting as the wind or designed by craft after the wiles of error. Not so God's word (Eph. 4:14). Like all truth it searches the conscience and will not allow a man to conceal his sins from the scrutiny of God (Heb. 4:12, 13). There is such a thing as a duty to believe. Words of the truth of life come home to a man speaking with the tones of a rightful master in the inmost rooms of the heart, and they send the evil spirits shuddering out into the dark. Such a power the gospel has always exercised. It is not a few precepts to be exhausted by literal obedience, nor mere formulas in the shape of a creed to be assented to as theoretically correct.

Study 12: The Gospel

Third Day: The Unchanging Gospel Comes from Jesus Christ

1. The gospel of the living God, the one and unchanging truth, is traced back to the life of Jesus upon earth (1 Tim. 6:3). In one of the latest writings of the New Testament we find the conviction that the gospel as preached in the Christian tradition is true to its source (1 John 1:3; 2:7); indeed in this epistle great stress is laid on the truth of the gospel as being guaranteed by personal testimony (1 John 1:1-3; 4:14). On turning to one of the earlier and indisputable letters we discover the same sense of continuous tradition, and that, too, in a church over which the apostle had no authority, and to whose foundation and upbuilding he had so far contributed nothing. Paul's words in Rom. 6:17 imply that the gospel to which his readers owe their salvation is the same as that which he preaches. Moreover, it is truth to be obeyed.

2. The Book of Acts may be taken as representing the common belief of the Church during the latter half of the first century. From Acts 2:42 we gather that the brethren were persuaded that one and only one variety of doctrine had been handed down from the apostles. Paul mentions in Gal. 1:23 the incredulity of the churches of Judæa with regard to himself. Evidently there was only one "faith," or body of truth which evoked faith among the brethren. With intense indignation he rejects the half truths of his opponents as being destructive of his gospel (Gal. 1:7; 2:7). This common faith centered in the unchanging Jesus Christ (Heb. 13:7-9).

3. The gospel then was regarded as one and the same. It had been preached before Paul was converted, in Judæa (1 Thess. 2:14), Rome and other parts, and it was held, they believed, in its ancient purity by the Hebrew Christians, and by the churches of Asia Minor to which the Johannine epistles were written. But though it was the same word of God, some had heard it directly others indirectly. Many claimed that they had listened to Jesus Himself on earth (John 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:6). Paul got his gospel from the risen Christ; most, however, from those who had been disciples of Jesus (Heb. 2:3). It was in one and all the Gospel of God traced back to its first Preacher, Jesus Himself (Mark 1:14; John 18:37).

Study 12: The Gospel

Fourth Day: The Gospel the Good News of God's Grace

1. In its literal sense the word "gospel" means "good news." As employed in the New Testament, where it first occurs in the narratives of Christ's life, it implies that a line of promises lies behind it. Jehovah had spoken good tidings through His prophets of a glorious coming kingdom, and of a new covenant when the Spirit of the Lord would be poured forth (Jer. 31:31ff.). All these things are fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Matt. 26:28). The new Israel takes the place of the old (1 Peter 2:4-10).

2. The gospel is indeed the best of all news, for it tells of salvation to a world of sinful men. All are plunged in sin, and under the distress of guilt. God's anger is manifested everywhere in the blunted understanding, the evil impulses of men, and their works of darkness (Eph. 2:1, 3, 12; 4:18). Mankind is in an evil plight, but to this aberrant and undeserving world there comes a message of grace. "Grace" and "gospel" are almost convertible terms. Grace is the quality of the sovereign Father who has not averted His countenance from the children of men in fixed displeasure, but has turned it towards them, and is willing to enter into fellowship with all His sinful sons who will turn to Him (Acts 11:23; Rom. 1:5; 3:24; Eph. 2:8; James 4:6; 1 Peter 1:10). Salvation issues from the gracious disposition of God. The gospel is the glad tidings that God has actually drawn near to pardon men.

3. Thus the New Testament idea of salvation puts it far beyond the reach of any mere effort of man by himself. It is not the result of his ethical striving to loosen himself from the coils that his sin has wound about him; it is not bestowed as a measure of desert; it does not come in an order of merit to those whose character is less sinful than that of their fellows. Salvation is a free, unstinted gift for all equally, if they will receive it, from the Father of lights whose loving face is shadowed by no eclipse (James 1:17). This undeserved blessing is so beyond the devisings of man, both in its present potency and its promise, that its contemplation awakens the writers of the New Testament to ever-increasing marvel. History converges upon its announcement; the prophets of the past, burdened with such gracious purposes, peer into the future to catch a glimpse of its glories, and the angels in heaven cease for a moment in their service to behold the progress of the message on earth (1 Peter 1:10-12; Eph. 1:4, 10).

Study 12: The Gospel

FIFTH DAY: HOW CAN SINFUL MAN APPROACH THE HOLY GOD

1. The primary fact of the gospel is its message as to God. He is the Father of mercies and God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3), the Bestower of grace, the Enricher with every blessing (1 Cor. 1:4, 5); He pardons sin and sheds the beauty of holiness on all who come within the range of His gifts (Heb. 13:20, 21). But the God of the New Testament is also the Jehovah of the Old Testament, the eternal righteous One in whom is light and no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). No shadow from the clouds of our sinful world is cast upon His holiness (Job 15:15; Heb. 9:23). How then can He come into contact with such a world as ours? Sin is the negation of the divine rule. God is holy love. Are not the objects of His love only those who love righteousness and hate iniquity? Is it not self-contradicting for a holy God to have intercourse with a world of sinful men? How is the Christian message of the God of grace possible?

2. The Jew felt this difficulty, and in order not to infringe upon the divine holiness he taught that Jehovah dwelt apart from this world. The Jew had become a deist. Bold and hard as this doctrine was it expressed a far profounder religious idea than that of the Greeks, who allowed their gods freer license than men in their debaucheries. Jehovah was for the Jew at once the source and the standard of all moral excellence. Plato had put this dilemma, Is holiness holiness because it is loved by the gods? or is it loved by the gods because it is holiness? The Hebrew replied, The will of God is holiness. Holiness is not a law that stands above and outside God. Garbled as was the teaching of the later scribes, the message of Israel was always recognizable, that God is an ethical Person from whom comes the unchanging moral order of the world.

3. But here arose the despair of prophecy (Isa. 6:5-7). The higher the ideal of holiness the more impossible did its realization appear. Mortal man is overpowered by the sublime moral excellence of Jehovah (Gen. 32:30; Ex. 33:20). He is the unapproachable Sovereign, the only incomparable Object of human adoration. Purity of life was a demand even for the worshiper in the temple (Ps. 15; 24:3-6). How then can frail, sinful man draw near to the eternal holy God?

Study 12: The Gospel

Sixth Day: The Prophetic Conception of the Holiness of God Surpassed by That of the New Testament

1. Though the substance of the teaching of the prophets never quite perished from the people even in the most degenerate days of Judaism, there had been a deplorable abatement in the ideal. They seem to have argued that since purity could be found absolutely only in God, they must cease to aim too high. Man must be satisfied with something less exacting than absolute righteousness. Jehovah would be contented with what is attainable by so frail a creature. This led inevitably to the Jew falling to the lower ideal which he had pitched for his minimum requirement of character. The heroic died out of his morals.

2. In the desert of Judæa a prophet is heard once more when John the Baptist calls the people to repentance, and multitudes are consecrated to a new life. Jehovah is no absentee God. He is coming to speak to His people. Even now the living God is on His way. There shall be much winnowing on the old threshing floor and a harvest of fresh grain be brought in. The gospels open with this call to reformation in order to prepare for approaching judgment (Matt. 3:1-12).

3. Pure as was the prophetic idea of God, revived in the preaching of the Baptist, it was surpassed by that of Jesus and His apostles. God the Father is Spirit (John 4:21-24). His holiness can no longer be symbolized by any such ritual as even the prophets of Israel employed. True worship must be in man's spirit where the divine image has been left upon him, and by a communion which is real, between God and the soul in very truth, and not merely through the darkened glass of the old temple service. He is the Father, but the Holy Father (1 Peter 1:15-17). Paul also has a passion for righteousness (Rom. 9:14-24; 3:3-6). One of the leading themes of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the necessity of a more sympathetic and faithful priest (Heb. 2:17; 4:14-16), a more real temple and a more efficient sacrifice (7:26-28; 8:1, 2; 9:14; 10:19-22), in order that we may enjoy fellowship with our heavenly Father. But it is needless to labor at such a plain truth as speaks from every page of the New Testament. From God the primal light is the highest that hath entered into the mind of man of purity, virtue, holiness.

Study 12: The Gospel

Seventh Day: Jesus Christ the Proof that God is Holy Love

1. But no less distinctive of the New Testament conception of God is the idea of His love. He is the Father, albeit the Holy Father. He redeems the world from sin and reconciles it to Himself. How is this possible? It is because He is Holy Love (1 John 4:7-19). Only the Holy God could devise salvation, for all sin is rebellion against His will. Only the God of Love could effect salvation, for this is the one power that can overcome hate. Holy Love is not indiscriminate benevolence, a quality less than the highest in a world where moral order is supreme. Whatever rescue is purposed by Divine Love must not do violence to Divine Holiness. The message of the gospel is that God the Father Himself has shown to the world not only His supreme love, but His supreme wisdom in establishing such a salvation (John 1:29; Rom. 3:26; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 1 John 1:7-9).

2. This is just the message the world needs. But is it true? A prophet might have a vision of such blessed hope born of his travail in this world of distress and sin, but what proof could he afford to others that his dream was more than his own ideal cast upon the lurid background of life? There are other things in life besides ideals. We have an awful experience. Sin reigns. Death, its curse, is part of the crushing natural order to which the proudest must submit. Is there in reality, as the noblest of our race have believed, a realm of eternal truth beyond the present, so that this world is but a gloomily brilliant drop scene, which shall some day rise and disclose the glory that excelleth?

3. In answer to such questionings the unanimous, nay, passionate reply of the New Testament writers is that they have proof of these beliefs as to God and the other world which are beyond the shadow of a cavil. Never since the birth of history has there been such conviction of the reality of the unseen and of the triumph of human nature in that goal of all good, the Kingdom of God. All their avenues of sense, thought and heart were crowded with proofs not to be gainsaid that the things most surely believed by them were true. But these proofs were all gathered up for them in the one great fact—Jesus Christ. He was not only the proof of their gospel. He was their gospel. To use the fine old figure, He is the Rock of Ages. Against it waves might dash, men might be swept past it, mists and clouds might gather round its peaks, but He stood as the one great fact that could not be shaken. In Him was a wealth of truth as to the reconciling and triumphant Holy Love of God that was beyond mortal powers to track out (Eph. 3:8).

Study 13: The Jesus of the Gospels

First Day: Our Gospels the Product of Faith in Jesus Christ as the Risen and Living Son of God

1. It is assumed in the New Testament that the foundation of the Christian faith was laid when Jesus Christ appeared on the scene of the world's history. The four gospels stand at its beginning as the source from which the new life took its rise. These gospels were written of course by believers, and they present the average Christian opinion of Christ from, at latest, the last quarter of the first century onwards. We have no life of Christ, strange to say not even any significant estimate of Him or His work, from Jew or pagan. Those who wrote these gospels as they now stand were not only sympathetic towards Jesus, but were persuaded that He had a right to those Divine attributes which in the Old Testament were the prerogatives of Jehovah alone. So every incident of His life on earth is recorded by men who were convinced that He was the Son of God. The facts are dyed in the color in which they were immersed.

2. Every gospel was written after the epistles of Paul. They saw the light first in a world which, we have already seen, accepted a common gospel, and the evident purpose of each narrative is so to portray the life of Jesus as to edify a church already holding a gospel in all essentials the same as that given us in the epistles of Paul. Even the gospel of Mark, which is accepted to-day by scholars as the earliest of all, is in its present form a portraiture of Jesus as the Son of God in very much the same sense as Rom. 1:1-4.

3. For our present purpose therefore we may take our gospels as they now stand, postponing any ulterior questions as to the Jesus of history, since our aim is to study the Person whom the Church, whose life we have already seen, placed at the heart of her gospel. That Church found both her motive and her hope in the Christ whose nature was far beyond any human proportions, and believed intensely that this Christ was also the Jesus of history. Unfortunately, perhaps one may say, this belief is not so universal in our age, "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." But what Figure is it that comes forth with such majesty from the pages of our gospels?

Study 13: The Jesus of the Gospels

Second Day: Elements in His Perfect Character—Its Equipoise

1. (1) Jesus is represented in the gospels as a perfectly sinless human being, and as the supreme ideal of manhood. This is stated in so many words in John 8:46, and is an assumption in the Person portrayed throughout the fourth gospel (John 1:14-18, 29; 6:51; 18:37). But it is also involved in the synoptic gospels—in the narratives of the Baptism and Transfiguration (Mark 1:11; 9:7), in the intuition of the demons (Mark 1:24), the self-reproach of Peter (Luke 5:8), in the insincere admission of the Pharisees who could find no fault in Him (Matt. 22:16), the testimony of Pilate (Matt. 27:24), and of the centurion (Luke 23:47).

2. Various elements in the character of Jesus contribute to its perfection. (a) His life as depicted in the gospels displays wonderful equipoise. The perfection of the Greek statue was its absolute proportion, each part being wrought out to the right mean in which excellence resides, and each part harmonizing with the rest. The Greek put his ideal of perfect beauty into marble; Jesus Christ embodied a more ideal beauty in human flesh and blood. He also lived a life of true proportion, being neither an ascetic nor a light-hearted man of the world. Mingling with the multitudes on the highway He knew the cares and pleasures of the average man and woman (Matt. 6:19-34). It was a delight for Him to have intercourse with them, so that His enemies reviled Him because He was not only friendly with social outcasts (Matt. 9:11), but apparently enjoyed life with them (Matt. 11:19). He loved the world of men, rejoicing with those who rejoiced (John 2:1-11), and weeping with those that wept (John 11:35).

3. It is, however, an error to think of Jesus as light of heart and free from care as "a brook warbling through a glade in summer time." History has not been far astray in depicting Jesus as "the man of sorrows." Confronted each day by Pharisees who had turned the religion of Jehovah into a mockery, and by a world abandoned to material pursuits, He often utters a cry of sadness (Mark 3:5; 8:11, 12, 15, 17); the burden of men's suffering pressed sorely on Him (Mark 7:8; John 11:38), and His own life was lived under the shadow of the cross (Mark 2:20; 8:31; 10:45). But His sorrow was tempered by the constant thought of His Father's will, and His highest joy was irradiated by gladsome service to others.

Study 13: The Jesus of the Gospels

Third Day: His Sinlessness

1. (b) There is no trace of self-dissatisfaction in the life of Jesus. It is true that He grew in wisdom (Luke 2:52), and the temptation (Luke 4:1-13) is explicable only on the assumption that when God's will was revealed to Him in the baptism, He found it a hard struggle to abandon the ideal of the Kingdom of God, which till this time He had cherished as the will of God, for the higher ideal of winning the kingdom through a life of suffering. But the narrative distinctly states that He was victorious (4:13), and thus far He had evidently attained. Other struggles came, notably the agonized fear of Gethsemane (Luke 22:44), but they reveal to us the process by which He learned obedience (Heb. 5:7, 8), a progress in which He put his foot firmly, if often with infinite pain, on the step that rose before Him and never wavered nor retreated. Unlike the ordinary man He displays none of the repeated effort to force a reluctant and undisciplined lower self into obedience to His higher nature. Of all men He alone can be said to have attained.

2. The distress of Jesus is occasioned by the evils among which He feels constrained to live. His love impels Him to sacrifice His own felicity in order to place Himself alongside of men whose natures and conditions, so antagonistic to His own in many respects, must have caused Him intense suffering. Against the purity of His life the depth to which hatred can go seems abysmal. No one by life and word has ever given even approximately such a relentless exposure of the heart of sin. Apart from the interpretation of Gethsemane as the proof that Jesus had taken upon Himself a responsibility for sins, which were causing Him no sense of personal guilt, He is not so brave in death as many an average man.

3. Jesus looks into the mirror of His own heart to find reflected there the will of God (Matt. 11:27; John 5:19). Paul on the contrary always looks to Christ, and his life is one of desperate struggle, the odds being often so heavy against him that he almost fears for the result (1 Cor. 9:27). Jesus having created a new sense of sin in the world, and having set an unattainable standard of conduct before men, must surely be sinless, if He is thus free from self-dissatisfaction. He reads the hearts of others (Mark 2:9); could He not read His own, and see the slightest taint of sin if there had been any there? Could He in truth have uttered the words of Matt. 11:28-30 unless He had been pure in heart?

Study 13: The Jesus of the Gospels

Fourth Day: His Sympathy, and Attitude Towards God

1. (c) Jesus exhibits perfect sympathy towards men. His judgments are expressed with searching truthfulness, and he reads men's motives at a glance. Hypocrisy is revealed with scorn (Matt. 22:18; 23:13ff.). But He calls the sinner and the outcast to Himself without harshness (Luke 7:47; John 5:14; Mark 14:38). In spite of His own purity He can deal mercifully with the sinner. (See especially the passage inserted in John 8:1-11). In this marvelous combination He surpasses the greatest of His apostles, who for all their moral sanity occasionally overstepped the mark (Gal. 5:12; 6:17; 2 Cor. 12:1ff.; cf. 1 John 2:22 with Matt. 12:32). But Jesus knew exactly how to apportion guilt, how to hold the balance between what was within one's power and what beyond it. So the multitudes gathered round Him instinctively. Women laden with their sins were not ashamed in His presence. Even Judas killed himself in remorse for having betrayed Him.

2. Jesus is further the perfect pattern for men in their attitude towards God. He is perfectly obedient as a Son to His Father. Prayer is His constant refuge when He is wearied out by sympathizing with human sorrows (Mark 1:35). Before the crises of His career He withdraws into solitude for communion with His Father (Luke 6:12; 9:18). His life is fed on His Father's word (Matt. 4:4), to do His will is His nourishment (John 4:34). Every turn that opens up for Him some new phase of His work is announced by His Father's voice (John 2:4; Luke 10:21; John 7:30; 12:23; Mark 14:35).

It is in this utter obedience to His heavenly Father that Jesus is the Example for His followers. His purity and moral completeness are beyond what frail men can hope to attain in this life, but His life of faith in God, the source of His strength, is the final exhibition of our duty and attitude towards our unseen Father.

Study 13: The Jesus of the Gospels

Fifth Day: Some Leading Principles in the Teaching of Jesus

1. (2) The teaching of Jesus contributes largely to the estimate which we form of the character of this Person in whom the brotherhood believed. His doctrine dealt chiefly with eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Its conditions of entrance are given in John 3:3; Matt. 18:3; and the quality of its members in Matt. 5:1-16. They are bound over to a most stringent righteousness penetrating below the letter of God's law to its spirit (Matt. 5:17-20). There are two foci to the ellipse of the life of a citizen of the Kingdom of God—love to God and love to man (Mark 12:28-31). Love is thus the fulfilling of the law. Now forevermore religion and morality are united. It is true that the Old Testament prophets had sought to unite what the ritualists had divorced, but with comparative unsuccess (Micah 6:8). Jesus brought into prominence the deepest truths of the old covenant and made them live in the hearts of His disciples.

2. He distinguishes what is ethical and spiritual from what is merely ceremonial or civil (Matt. 5:21—6:18). Essentially different as they are in themselves they lay side by side in the Jewish economy as intimately as the particles in a heap of iron filings and sulphur, though they were never fused into one, and in that age there was no prophetic power which like the magnet could disengage the true steel from the heap. Jewry was ruled more by caste than by true religion. But Jesus swept away the artificial and unethical distinctions of ritual cleanness (Mark 7:1-23). This was to prove a far-reaching revolution, though formally it was only the clear enunciation of the old demand for purity of heart (Prov. 4:23). Instead of the worship of the letter or the form, God must be worshiped in spirit and in truth (John 4:23, 24), and along with this must go genuine service towards man, which is most truly illustrated in the life of the Son of man (Mark 10:45).

3. The teaching of Jesus does not consist of precepts, nor is it a new codified morality, but it comprehends a few universal principles which cover the life of man as it relates to God, his fellow, and himself. He teaches further that the Old Testament when rightly understood contains the substance, if it be only in bud, of what in His words bursts forth into full flower (Matt. 5:17-20; John 5:46, 47). But they have a wonderful originality. (a) He gives the old ideas new emphasis, new perspective and a spiritual purity which the Old Testament setting often obscured. This is most obviously so in His doctrine of God as the holy yet loving Father of each individual who will accept the salvation His love has provided (John 3:16). (b) Religion and morality are indissolubly combined, and the essential and formal in worship, civil ordinances and the ethical life distinguished by a spiritual principle (Matt. 12:7; 9:14-17; 6:1-18). (c) Morality is widened to embrace mankind. Whoever is in need is one's neighbor (Luke 10:29-37). (For the subject of this study see Bosworth's "Studies in the Teaching of Jesus," xvi.—xxiii.)

Study 13: The Jesus of the Gospels

Sixth Day: Jesus as a Worker of Miracles

1. To appreciate the effect of this teaching on the disciples and the multitudes we must remember the wonderful character of Him who taught, and further the power which was disclosed in His life. Person, words and works are all combined in our gospels to produce a Figure of extraordinary impressiveness. So we proceed to the miraculous element in the gospels as they stand.

2. Jesus has great influence over the demons, working by the finger of God results that put the Pharisees to shame. Their exorcism was as a rule a bungling imposition (Mark 3:22-27; cf. Luke 11:14-26). His ministry is filled with the liberation of victims to this awful servitude.

3. There are other miracles with a greater show of power embedded in these narratives, not only miracles of healing (Matt. 4:24; 12:15), but stupendous acts of supremacy over nature in its mightier aspects (Mark 5:35-43; 6:30-52). No reader, however, can fail to be struck by the sobriety of the delineation, for all these mighty deeds are interwoven in a narrative which sets forth Jesus as a marvelous moral character. The temptation of Jesus, in which once and for all the spiritual principles of His life's work are assumed, involves the possesion of ability to work miracles.

There is nothing of the mythological in this Figure. The mythical hero performs wondrous deeds in order to magnify his own glory in the sight of others, either by extricating himself from a difficulty or astounding by his power. Jesus never does this (Matt. 4:3-7). He is thoroughly human as far as He Himself is concerned. His power is used only for the good of others. Then His works are sane, self-restrained and ethical. So their effect on the people was not to fill them with alarm, as though their life were delivered up to the caprice of an all-powerful man. He gave them instead a sense of security, because they felt that His pure will lay behind His works. A particularly instructive example is afforded by Luke 5:8, where Peter's surprise is aroused not by the display of power, but by the holiness of One who could do such a miracle. No figure in literature competes with Jesus in the sanity of His miracles, and the perfect moral restraint under which He performs them for the good of others rather than of Himself.

Study 13: The Jesus of the Gospels

Seventh Day: The Place of the Miracles of Jesus in the Apostolic Gospel

1. We may consider now what contribution the miracles of Jesus made to the gospel in the view of those who have recorded them for us.. Those disciples believed intensely that Jesus was Lord of this world, so that He was able to save them from any earthly disaster. Love was at the helm and would bring them safely through, for He could say to the waves, "Peace, be still" (Mark 4:35-41). This belief was undoubtedly a great source of comfort to His followers, who from the sixth decade of the first century were subjected to world forces so hostile that nothing but the most vivid faith in a Master who was Lord even of world empires would suffice to deliver them. Is the buoyant faith of the Apocalypse and of the early Church generally to be credited with transmuting a non-miraculous Jesus into the all-powerful Christ, simply because they needed such an one to support them in their trials? When men are sinking in a storm they need more than a straw to save them.

2. The miraculous control of Jesus over the world also supplied their gospel with the truth that the world must serve the kingdom, and the material become a slave to the spiritual. His sovereignty over nature never seemed to them to violate law, for according to His teaching and their belief, the world was nothing in itself, and was only to last until God's purposes for the Kingdom of Heaven in this earthly scene should be complete (Matt. 24:14, 29-31, 35). The natural world was merely a stage for a spiritual drama.

3. Life remained for them very much as it had been. They toiled for their living, they had pain, they died, in spite of the fact that Jesus had raised some from the dead. They saw that He had not delivered Himself from privation, nor suffering, nor any untoward circumstances, not even from death itself. And that not because He was unable to do so, but because in His love and wisdom He had other purposes for His kingdom. So they, too, acquiesced in a life of privation and martyrdom like His, and did not lose hope. If He did not rescue them from the demonic forces of the world it was not from His lack of power, or love. The reason lay in His inscrutable will. All life for them was one. Jesus Christ was Lord of all. This fact they traced back to the earthly life of Jesus, whose illimitable power dispensed by His perfect love to all in need, first proved to them that He was supreme over the outer world of sense, and thereafter was guiding the humblest human soul without fail to a final destiny of good (cf. Acts 2:22; 10:38).

Study 14: The Jesus of the Gospels—His Claim

First Day: Jesus puts Himself Forward as an Integral Portion of His Message

1. Whom then does Jesus Christ claim to be—so perfect in His human character, so full of majesty, so unique in His teaching, so impressive with His power? He speaks with incomparable authority, never ranking Himself with the prophets. He comes forward as One beyond whom there is no appeal. He never weighs and balances, but decides with unerring insight. The people were not long in discovering a new authority in Him (Mark 1:21, 22). The scribes taught precedent upon precedent, always finding their authority in the Mosaic law, or its traditional interpretation through the great rabbis. Jesus places over against "Ye have heard that it was said," a "but I say unto you" (Matt. 5: 21, 22, 27, 28, 33, 34), assuming thereby that He can abrogate the Mosaic legislation by giving it His own fulfillment of its meaning. This no prophet could have done, for Moses had received the law by direct revelation from God. Hence in issuing new legislation for His kingdom Jesus makes an implicit claim to be above Moses. Jesus is not a prophet reviving the teaching of the past. The old in His words becomes new.

2. Further the authority of Jesus, as the gospels show Him, does not reside in the teaching itself, as though it were a word of God whoever spoke it. His gospel does not stand independently of Himself as did the message of the prophet, of whom it was said, "The word of the Lord came unto the prophet" (1 Sam. 3:7; Jer. 17:15; Hosea 1:2; Zech. 4: 6). Jesus utters the word as His own. Further He Himself is part of His message. He demands faith in Himself as a source of power and life (Matt. 11:27-30; 18:6). He stands in the center of the hopes and fortunes of His disciples (Luke 12:8). In His name mighty deeds are to be done (Matt. 7:22; Luke 9:49; Mark 9:23) and works of mercy performed (Mark 9:39). Especially is this true in the fourth gospel. Jesus becomes food for His followers, His flesh and blood giving them spiritual sustenance (John 3:16; 4:10, 14; 6:35, 51, 53-57). He is the Vine and His disciples like branches ingrafted into Him draw from Him their nutriment (John 15:1-5). Jesus Himself is the Saviour of men (Mark 2:17, omit "to repentance" as in R. V.; Luke 19:10; Mark 15: 31; Luke 4:23; John 4:42).

Study 14: The Jesus of the Gospels—His Claim

Second Day: Jesus Forgives Sins

1. Analogous to this is the authority with which Jesus forgives sins, assuming to exercise a prerogative which the Jews regarded with right as peculiarly divine (Mark 2:7). His enemies readily detected the difference between such a general statement as "God forgives thy sins," which any one might utter as a fact, to be either disbelieved or accepted as a truism in many cases by those who listen, and the authoritative "Thy sins are forgiven thee," which in the mouth of Christ compelled belief and brought a most gracious sense of pardon. Multitudes of sick souls cannot bring themselves to believe that God will forgive their sins. They think they are in too grievous a case. But Jesus persuaded those who listened to Him that their sins were forgiven (Mark 2:5-12; Luke 7:47-50; John 8:11). There was something in His presence that brought instant relief to their hearts. Men did not question that He had a right to do this, for a gracious peace-giving power proceeded from Him and caused a great calm to pass upon their troubled spirits. They did not question whether possibly they would still have to settle their accounts with God against whom their sins had really been committed. His pardon they were persuaded carried with it that of God also.

2. To pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow, to assuage remorse, was a diviner act than to heal disease, inasmuch as the cure of the soul demands a physician of subtler insight and more potent remedies. And it is only since Jesus has appeared on earth that this truth of forgiveness has become an axiom of the Christian consciousness. As long as Israel had only its outward ritual the sense of pardon was never profound, for the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. Israel was left with a burden of transgression for which there was indeed a promise of removal, but nothing more actual than a symbolic atonement (Heb. 10:1-4). So the great promise of the new covenant to be initiated in the Messianic age was that sins would be forgiven (Jer. 31:34; cf. Heb. 10:15-18). Jesus made the gift real. He brought it down to earth, and on His own initiative He did what no man had ever done before—He forgave sins, and made His disciples feel that He could cleanse their guilt away.

Study 14: The Jesus of the Gospels—His Claim

Third Day: The Term "Son of Man," and Its Old Testament Antecedents

1. The names applied to Jesus in the gospels are very significant of His character. In so far as He uses them they are claims which He puts forward. Of these far the most frequent is the term, "Son of Man," employed only by Jesus of Himself, never by His disciples. We are not concerned here with any discussion of what the title may have signified as it was originally used. Our purpose is simply to examine it in the gospels as they stand, so that we may get some idea of what it conveyed to the church from which our gospels sprang.

2. Jesus uses it of Himself in every phase of His activity—His lowliness (Luke 9:58), His majesty (Mark 2:28), His service (Luke 19:10; Mark 10:45), His glorious future (Luke 21:27; Matt. 26:64). Majesty in humiliation, power through suffering, royal victory by service—this varied experience falls to the Son of Man. He must be a Person of extraordinary range of character. Who can this Son of Man be? was the question which the people put after He had taught them for some time (John 12:34).

3. There are certain passages in the Old Testament which might suggest a great Figure to come, of whom some seers caught glimpses though they never saw Him face to face. Ps. 8 contains a remarkable prophecy of the coming glory of man as compared with his present frailty. Dan. 7:13, 14 also speaks of an eternal Kingdom of One like unto a Son of man to take the place of those founded on brute force. The prophecies of Isaiah also foretell a kingdom to be established in righteousness (60:1, 18-22), which is to be set up through the agency of the Servant of the Lord (53:61). This is the most magnificent conception of prophecy.

4. It cannot be said that these passages as they stand in the Old Testament give a very coherent picture, nor need we be surprised that the Jewish ideas as to the person of their coming Deliverer were exceedingly vague. Looking back we can read the gist of them—man is to be delivered from his present humiliation into an eternal kingdom of righteousness. The Lord of this kingdom is to be a divinely commissioned One like unto a Son of man with all glorious human dignity; preceding this final glory there is a process of much suffering on the part of the Servant of the Lord who redeems His brethren. But we read that unity into all these passages and ideas because Jesus Christ stands for us in the gospels. Look into His life—the life of the Son of Man on earth, and there come streaming up into its focussed light all those divergent rays from hidden depths of prophecy.

Study 14: The Jesus of the Gospels—His Claim

Fourth Day: The Method of Christ's Self-Revelation as Son of Man

1. It seems then that Jesus used the term, "Son of Man," as a parable, suggestive of these foresights of the Messiah. To have spoken of Himself to the people as Messiah would have been to defeat His purpose, for they had one idea of that Figure, and He wished to teach them another. He wished to create in His own life a new conception of what Messiah should be, so He avoided the term itself as current but debased coin. But as He lived, wrought, blessed, forgave sins, called men unto Him, taught words of grace and truth, made the future of men dependent on their attitude to Himself (Mark 8:38), people began to ask, Who is this Person? Can Messiah be greater than He? Must He not be the Messiah? (John 7:31). Then when the time was ripe, and His followers had received an ineffaceable impression of the character of Jesus, He admitted that He was the One for whom they were looking, foretold in Scripture, the very Messiah.

2. The first real acknowledgment of the Messiahship of Jesus made with any appreciation of its meaning, is that of Peter (Matt. 16:15) within the immediate circle of His followers. And Jesus regards it as nothing less than a revelation from God Himself—so different was He, the actual Messiah, from the figure of popular imagination. It was probably not until a year later that the people gave Him Messianic acclaim on His entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:1-11).

3. The method of Jesus is to send His disciples back to the Scriptures to discover there the true meaning of the divine promises so that they may learn surely if slowly that they are being fulfilled in a far deeper sense in His life than they at first imagined. At the outset of His career He tells the people that He is to do the work of the Servant of the Lord as outlined in Isa. 61:1, 2 (Luke 4:16-30). When John in his despondency sends from prison to ask Jesus whether He is really the Messiah, instead of answering directly He bids his diciples report to their master the works of Jesus so that he may see that the promise of the Servant is being fulfilled in Galilee (Luke 7:18-23).

Study 14: The Jesus of the Gospels—His Claim

Fifth Day: The Death and Return in Glory of the Son of Man

1. As the months rolled by and the disciples were persuaded that Jesus was the Christ, He revealed to them the fact that Messiah must die (Mark 8:31), and this was repeated again and again to most unwilling learners (Mark 9:31; 10:34, 45). Unintelligible as the word was it should not have been altogether new, for the note of sacrifice must have run like an undertone through His life. Even when He made the highest claims and was most prescient of coming glory, He was the Servant of the Lord. This profoundest conception of the Old Testament should have been a counterpoise to their extravagant hopes, for a true Israelite should have known that Israel could never be redeemed without suffering (Luke 24:25-27, 45, 46).

2. Another large element in the Old Testament hope of the Messianic age was the new covenant (Jer. 31:31ff.) whereby God would pardon the sins of the true Israel. So one of the last and most solemn acts of Messiah is to institute this new covenant in His own blood (Matt 26: 27, 28), that thereby the many may receive pardon for their sins. This is a supreme symbolical act of the Servant of the Lord, but the real agony of pouring out His soul unto death does not come till Gethsemane and His trial (Matt. 26:38, 39; John 19:10, 11). The travail of soul was followed by its reward, when as He always foretold, and as the narrative records, He rises the glorious Son of God to enter into His eternal kingdom. This death according to the fourth gospel is a part of His exaltation to a larger life (John 10:16; 12:32).

3. We cannot wonder that the disciples were amazed at the death of such a perfect Being as Jesus. At first it seemed as though He were deliberately courting death, and that this madness would bring His Kingdom to an end (Luke 13:22, 31-35; Mark 10:32). Only experience taught them the necessity that He should reach His glorious throne through suffering. For Jesus claimed that the Son of Man would return in glory to be the Judge of all (Mark 8:38; Matt. 7:22, 23; 24:30, 31; 26:64). His rising from the dead was not to be the final dealing of Jesus with the children of men.

4. So Jesus used the term, Son of Man, as a parable. It covered His claims as Messiah. The Son of Man of His creation was the Messiah He wished to be. As Son of Man He is fulfiller of the past, and Head of the Kingdom of God. To Him all must come. He is the supreme Man, who has proved His right to be Lord of the kingdom of men because by His sacrifice He has won it (Mark 10:45). The many have been ransomed thereby and have their sins pardoned. But the full glory of the Messiah will only be manifest when the Son of Man returns to judgment.

Study 14: The Jesus of the Gospels—His Claim

Seventh Day: No Man Cometh Unto the Father but by Me

1. The witness to the divine sonship of Jesus Christ is completed in the gospels by their narratives of the resurrection. It is not our purpose to discuss in this place their historical worth. Even at His earliest foretelling of His coming death rays of glory flash forth around the disc of His eclipse, for He always prophesied His resurrection (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34), and in the fourth gospel the death is regarded as a step towards heavenly dignity (John 17:1). But it was not till the shadow of the world with its agony and death moved by that the full glory of Jesus as the Son of God was revealed to His followers by His appearances in His risen body. He was emancipated from the narrow earthly house to enter upon a wider life, and to go shepherding erring Gentiles in order that they might come with the Jews to form one flock (John 10:16-18).

2. Thus the Jesus of the gospels makes the unhesitating claim that He and He alone can reveal God to the world. His human life is as it were the mirror in which we can read the full glory, truth and beauty of God, who is a Spirit (John 1:14-18). As the Son He is the living portrait of the Father, His life making the Divine Spirit concrete for men (John 14:6-11). He is Son of God because also the Son of Man. Only the Head of the kingdom of men could reveal God to His brethren. Only in the perfect human nature could we have any adequate reflection of the divine. How is it possible for me to get a higher conception of God than from the Son of Man, whose nature is so fully the creation of (Luke 1:35), and possessed by, the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22) that He is at the same time the Son of God? Jesus asserts that He is different from other men, because He has an endowment of God's Spirit, and a perfection of manhood which puts Him at the head of the race. During His life Jesus claimed, according to the gospels, that He could lead men to the Father, and without doubt the Jesus of the gospels has done this for believers ever since. Do I wish to know what God is? I look to Jesus Christ. His life on earth, as it stands in the gospels, is a well from which the life of God Himself flows into my soul. In Christ I discover the mind of God, His love towards me, His purpose for me and His power to effect that purpose.

Study 15: The Jesus Christ of the Apostles

First Day: The Resurrection of Jesus Christ; the Pauline Conception of the Living Christ

1. The churches which received the letters of the New Testament were evangelized by missionaries who preached substantially the Jesus Christ of our gospels. From this conception there sprang up on every side, even in the hearts of pagans who had never seen Jesus, an enthusiastic devotion to His person (Acts 16:31; 17:2, 3, 6, 7; 1 Peter 1:8). Now what is involved in this universal devotion of the apostolic church to Jesus Christ? What are the essential elements in the conception?

2. (1) That Jesus Christ is a living Person. He is not merely an entrancing memory, nor does He fill up their background as a beautiful ideal of the past. He is one whose power is felt in the midst of their present world, and with whom they hold intercourse. The apostolic church is based on the belief that Jesus was risen from the dead. The resurrection meant for them a renewal of the life which they had enjoyed with Jesus on earth before His death. He was absent from them in body, but His Spirit was in their midst. With glad assurance the disciples proclaim that their Master has triumphed over death and is now seated at the right hand of God (Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:31; 17:18). Jesus is thus the Prince of Life.

3. Paul's faith in the living Christ is obvious. He seems to lose his own self in that of Christ (Gal. 2:20). Paul does not move in the realm of ideas but within the influence of a living Person. Language fails him when he tries to express the intimacy of his fellowship with his Lord, his favorite term, "in Christ," denoting that every faculty is absorbed in the life of which Christ is the aim and controlling power (Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 1:2). The old man perishes and the believer becomes a limb of the living Christ (Rom. 6:11; Col. 3:3). "To the Christ within Paul attributed all that he did and experienced as a Christian man. . . . It was as if the very personality of Christ had entered into the apostle and used him as the organ of its expression" (Somerville). At a well remembered moment in his career Christ a living Person entered into his life and ever since he has had no mind or will of his own. In preaching his gospel he himself puts forward no claim on his own behalf. Christ leads him like a slave, while his message, bringing to all the knowledge of the grace of God is a fragrance of Christ Himself, life-giving to those who will accept it (2 Cor. 2:14, 15). (See Findlay's article, "St. Paul," ii., 3; c. in Hastings' Dictionary of Bible, Vol. III.)

Study 15: The Jesus Christ of the Apostles

Second Day: Apostolic Belief in Christ as a Living Person

1. All the other epistles agree in regarding Jesus Christ as a living Person. According to Hebrews He is the High Priest, who makes continual intercession for His brethren in the heavenly temple where He stands in the sight of God. This He does by reason of His endless life (Heb. 7:16, 24, 25; 9:24). He is now crowned with glory and honor, the first of His brethren to inherit the world to come (Heb. 2:8, 9). Thither He has taken with Him His human nature enriched by the life on earth, in which He sympathized with the sins and sufferings of men (Heb. 2:17, 18). No epistle surpasses that of Hebrews in its perfect blending of the earthly experience of Jesus with His present glory in active service to His brethren who are in this world (Heb. 10:20). Having suffered through His earthly experience He learned obedience and overcame His temptation (Heb. 4:14-16), and is now the personal living pledge that God will be true to the new covenant and forgive sins (Heb. 7:22; 12:23). Once on earth, now alive at the right hand of God He guarantees to His brethren the reality of the unseen world (Heb. 6:19, 20).

2. In 1 Peter 2:4, 5, Jesus Christ is referred to as the living cornerstone to whom believers come to form with Him a new temple of humanity, in which a true service will be offered to God by a universal priesthood of believers. He also engages the affection of those who had once been heathen and who had never seen Him (1 Peter 1:8). Yet in this epistle also the human life of Jesus on earth is made the example for the Christians who have to endure sufferings in His name (2:21; 4:13, 14), so that the object of their love is a living Person with a very real human experience on earth, which gives body and meaning to His present heavenly existence. Even in James, the Christian is exhorted to hold to the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, *i. e.,* One who by His resurrection is now enthroned in glory (James 2:1).

3. The great error which the author of First John wishes to refute is the teaching of the Gnostics, that Jesus received the Holy Spirit at His baptism and that the Spirit of the Christ left Him before His passion. With the utmost earnestness he repudiates the doctrine that Jesus Christ the now living Person did not live and suffer in a true human life on earth (1 John 2:22; 4:2, 3; 5:6). Finally, at the opening of the epistles to the seven churches there stands the figure of Him who guards the life of the brotherhood, one invested with all the dignity of a perfect human life exalted through death to a throne of eternal power (Rev. 1:17, 18).

Study 15: The Jesus Christ of the Apostles

Third Day: Jesus Lives in the Hearts of His Followers Through the Holy Spirit

1. That early Church did not think of Jesus as a prophet who was dead, such as Elijah or John the Baptist. In some sense it might be said that they lived on in the lives of their followers. But this was not the sense in which the Christians interpreted the living Christ. Jesus was not ranked even with the greatest of the prophets. All they were dead. There was no longer any new thought, or quickening personal power from them. That indefinable influence and essence which we call personality is limited in human beings by death. Take away the living presence and the silent pitiless years soon do their work. Unless we refresh our affection with the kindling eye, and hear the ringing echo of one word more, and have the soliloquy of our meditation on our friend's goodness invaded by a throbbing ray of love from the living heart, soon his portrait in our memory loses its color, that gallery so full, alas, of ghostly forms, whose sight touches the fountain of tears as they call up "the old, unhappy, far-off things and days of long ago."

2. But it was not so with Christ. He was alive (Acts 16:7). Just as I become a reproduction of the character of my stronger and nobler friend who lives by my side, those believers felt that their hearts were plastic to the living Spirit of Christ, which was shaping their souls into His likeness (Acts 5:9; 7:55, 59). In the classic exposition of the nature of the Spirit of Christ (John 16:8-13) we are told of a living personal Spirit reproducing the life of Christ in His followers, standing by their side to help them in time of trouble, supplementing His teaching with truth which at the time when Jesus spoke was beyond their grasp; in fact, a living fountain in which the mind of their Lord was made known to them. This Spirit was to bridge the chasm which in all other lives divides the earth from the unseen world, and enabled them to recognize in the exalted Christ Him whom they had known in Galilee as the Son of Man (John 20:21-23).

3. In Paul's epistles also the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (2 Cor. 3:17), and by the personal influence of this Spirit the believer is transformed into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). But this is also the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9-11, 14-17; 1 Cor. 3:16). In other places this Spirit is associated with Father and Son (2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:4-6). Again the Spirit seems to have a function of its own (Rom. 8:9, 26; 1 Cor. 12:11; Gal. 4:6). So it would appear that just as Jesus revealed the Father when on earth, by means of the Spirit which was the essence of His person, so the same Spirit of Christ is a present personal power revealing God to the believer.

Study 15: The Jesus Christ of the Apostles

FOURTH DAY: JESUS CHRIST THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD

1. (2) Jesus Christ was for the Apostolic Church the Son of God. Nor is this to be taken in a general sense of being especially devoted to God's will, nor as similar to God in character. All the resources of language are exhausted to express a thought which perhaps transcends definition. They believed that Jesus came from a home where He had lived an eternal existence with His Father (Phil. 2:6; 2 Cor. 8:9; Eph. 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20; Heb. 1:2; 13:8; 1 John 4:9). He was also the agent of His Father in the creation of the world (Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; John 1:3, 4). We must not forget that the world of which they thought was the world of men, a series of ages in which humanity was woven into one interrelated whole. The solidarity of the race constituted the world. The external world of matter only had importance in so far as it was the sphere in which men lived. The Christians believed that God was guiding all things towards a glorious consummation of His Kingdom. Jesus Christ is His Vicegerent in the conduct of the Kingdom to its issue. Therefore He must have presided over it and been master of the world from the very beginning, for Jesus Christ has been the same Eternal Person from the commencement of time (John 1:4, 9).

2. He also was in the history of Israel directing it by His Spirit (John 1:11; Heb. 3:6; 10:15; 1 Peter 1:11; Acts 7:51, 52). A preexistent Person, He is the full Revealer of the nature of God. The Son reveals the Father. He is the image of God otherwise invisible to us (Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4-6), so that as we look upon the face of Jesus Christ we behold there the glory of the true God who is Light. The great passage, Phil. 2:6-11, brings out the same truth. Jesus indeed laid aside the exercise of His external divine prerogatives which He shared with His Father in the heavenly world, but His essential character was and remained even on earth the same as that of God. In Heb. 1:3 a similar conception is expressed under the figure of a ray of light. The light of the Father's nature becomes as it were a nucleus of light in Jesus Christ, whose personality wears the stamp of essential deity. The same thought is involved in 1 John 1:1; 4:12; 5:12.

3. Such passages show that the leading epistles of the New Testament attribute to Jesus Christ conceptions which in the Old Testament were the prerogatives of Jehovah alone. According to the Old Testament God created the world and guides its history, and He sent His Word and Spirit to the prophets. These powers are all ascribed in the New Testament to Jesus Christ. In Him the fullness of the Godhead resides bodily (Col. 2:9). They worship Jesus and pray to Him (1 Cor. 1:2), they come to the Father through Him. The depths of the Father's grace and love are opened to the light in Jesus (2 Cor. 4:6; John 1:14, 16, 18). Only through Him has the Father held contact with the universe of men in the past, only through Him is He now in the world reconciling it to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19), and so through Him alone shall we forever approach the Father (Heb. 7:24-26).

Study 15: The Jesus Christ of the Apostles

Fifth Day: Jesus Christ the Redeemer from Sin: Paul and Hebrews

1. (3) Jesus Christ is also the Redeemer from sin. In the earlier days the attempt was made to fit His death into the teaching of the Old Testament (Acts 3:18, 19), and Paul tells us that it was one of the primary elements of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:3) that the death of Christ had procured forgiveness of sins. The death of Christ was the theme of his preaching to the Corinthians and Galatians (1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 3:1). Instead of being a source of shame (Gal. 3:13) the death of Jesus Christ on the cross is to the Christian the power of God (1 Cor. 1:18). It furnishes a motive of supreme efficacy.

2. It is a sign of God the Father's transcendent love (Rom. 8:32; 2 Cor. 5:20), and also of that of Christ the Son (2 Cor. 5:14, 15; Gal. 2:20). It is also the means of reconciling the love and justice of God so that He may be true to His own nature in forgiving sins (Rom. 3:26), for through His loving self-sacrifice Christ has removed the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13). If it were not for Jesus Christ's death the whole world would be burdened with a load of sin from which there would be no escape (Gal. 3:22). But all this is taken away (Col. 2:13, 14). This divine reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-21) is of such universal significance that it was from the beginning an integral part of the Father's purpose of love toward the world (Eph. 1:6, 7). Paul's writings are saturated with the thought of the redemptive efficacy of Christ's death.

3. The theme is hardly less prominent in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The eternal Son of God is now seated in majesty after having made a sufficient offering to remove sin and give man access to God as a true worshiper (Heb. 1:4). He is the great High Priest who having made the sacrifice with His own blood is now ushering His brethren into the holy of holies. It is because He once for all offered Himself that no more sacrifices for sin are necessary (Heb. 9:26, 28; 10:10, 12). That offering gets its value because it was made in a spirit of absolute obedience to His Father's will. Thus Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself, an eternal Spirit without blemish, and thereby men can have their guilt removed and come boldly unto the throne of grace (Heb. 9:14: 10:9, 10, 19-22).

Study 15: The Jesus Christ of the Apostles

Sixth Day: The Gospel of the Cross

1. Equally vital to the thought of Peter is the function of Jesus Christ as the suffering servant of Jehovah, who by His death removed the guilt and power of sin (2:21; 3:18), by His blood has consecrated the believers as the new Israel of God (1 Peter 1:2) for He is the true sacrifice (3:18, 19). A similar conception occurs in Acts 20:28. The Lamb that was slain receives in Rev. 5:8-10 the homage of the new Israel purchased by His blood (cf. Rev. 1:5, 6), in which all sins have been washed away (7:14), and through which the adversary has been overcome (12:11). This sacrifice of the Lamb is no chance event, but is a part of the eternal purpose of God (Rev. 13:8).

In opposition to men possessed by the spirit of antichrist who deny that there is sin, and consequently deny also that Christ suffered when Jesus died, the atoning death of Jesus is set forth in First John as essential to the truth of God (1 John 5:4-6), and as the only remedy for sin (1 John 1:7; 2:2; 4:10).

2. Christianity is the religion of the cross. It is the religion of sacrifice embodied in the service of the Son of Man, who through His death has swept away all sacrifices. Those early believers regarded the life of Christ, but especially His death, as an almost incredible proof of the love of God (John 3:16). Why should such an One as Jesus Christ have left His home to come down and engage in the awful wrestle with sin, and deliver sinful men from their bondage to fear of death, the curse of sin? (Heb. 2:14, 15.) The death of Christ was not a sacrifice to circumstance. The purer the human Jesus was felt by them to be, the more exalted the throne to which the Christ had risen, the more acute became to them the question, Why did He die? It was not for His own sin. It was only for theirs, nay, for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). That the Holy Christ should die was to be explained only as the supremest act of vicarious love. His personal disciples never forgot the agony of His spotless soul as they saw it on the cross, or in Gethsemane, or even when He was subjected during His Galilean ministry to the contradiction of sinners. The death of Jesus meant that the love of Father and Son toward sinful men was so infinite that they would not leave men to their own ruin, but Christ Himself took upon Him the awful task of rendering null and void the claims of sin upon man (Heb. 9:26).

3. Further, His death stood forth as the great fact in history which proves forever that God is a righteous God, of whose nature sin is the direct negation (Rom. 3:25, 26). When He pardons sin He is not indifferent to it. Only by the utmost sacrifice He could make is it possible for Him to remain true to His own nature and yet show favor to sinful men. The death of Christ is the proof that God is a Holy God who cannot disregard the moral order of His universe. He cannot compel the unwilling sinner, one who loves his sin, to accept pardon, for that would be immoral; but in giving Christ to die He has furnished sinners with the most powerful motive for accepting the pardon of a self-consistent Holy Father.

Study 15: The Jesus Christ of the Apostles

Seventh Day: Jesus Christ the Judge of The World and Consummator of the Kingdom of God

1. Jesus Christ was believed to be the Judge of all. This was a part of the earliest gospel (Mark 8:38), and the return of Jesus was preached by Peter during the opening days of the Church's life (Acts 3:20, 21). In Acts 10:42 He is proclaimed as the Judge of quick and dead. This idea is expressed in the earliest letter of Paul (1 Thess. 4:16, 17) in language similar to that of the gospels, and in 2 Cor. 5:10 there might almost be a reminiscence of Matt. 25:31-46. The final stage of the rule of Christ when He shall have completed the work given Him by His Father to do is described in 1 Cor. 15:25, 28. Then shall the harvest of the kingdom of which the risen Christ is the first-fruits be gathered in (1 Cor. 15:23).

2. This thought of the return of Jesus to consummate His work runs through the other epistles (Heb. 9:27, 28; 10:37). It is contemplated in First Peter with joy (1 Peter 1:13), though it will also bring judgment to many (4:5, 7, 17). Jude regards it as a disclosure of divine mercy (21), and Second Peter as the signal for the dissolution of the present system, the fulfillment of the prophetic day of the Lord (2 Peter 3:10-13); and John as the manifestation of glory to which the children of God shall be conformed (1 John 3:2). The Book of Revelation is a pæan in honor of the slain Lamb, who is victorious over all His enemies, who alone can open the book of the future (5:1-14), and ushers the Church of the Redeemed into the new Jerusalem.

3. What a stupendous Person Jesus Christ was in the mind of the early Christians. He dominated not only their own life, but all existence. This present was to them only a perishing world, at its best of small value. It shrank into insignificance before the glory of Christ and the realm of the new Zion into which He was about to lead them. But just because Christ has snatched the believer from the drift of the present evil age (Gal. 1:4), He has appointed him work to do in the short time that still remains. Something is left undone by Christ for His fellow-worker to complete, even to sharing in His sufferings, so that he may contribute to the establishing on earth of the eternal Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 3:10-15; Col. 1:24).

Study 16: The Manifold Gospel

First Day: The Pauline Type

1. The Person of Christ appealed in different ways to the writers of the New Testament. Men of most diverse temperaments acknowledged His mastery, having found in His many-sided character that aspect of perfection which completed their several natural endowments. "The mind" of Christ had a broad sympathy which fitted into each life and equipped it for its peculiar accomplishment. So we have a variety of types in the New Testament. We must not fall into the mistake of reading all the books in the light of the Pauline epistles. Each writer saw Jesus Christ from his own angle of vision, and wrote out of the profound conviction that what he saw of Him would quicken and fortify others. It must not be forgotten that strong religious experience accounts for the New Testament

2. But unquestionably the Pauline conception of the gospel has had immense influence on Western Christianity. Paul seems to have left a larger impression on early Christendom than any other individual, and he claims to have received his gospel direct from Christ without human mediation of any kind (Gal. 1:1, 11, 12, 16). One reason of his great power is to be found in his training. While perhaps surpassed in culture by the author of Hebrews, he was superior to all in his liberality of spirit and breadth of view. No student can afford to neglect to ponder carefully the gospel of one of the most brilliant students of his day. He had an absorbing interest in winning the empire of which he was a citizen to loyalty to Christ. And he understood the Jewish system as few others did (Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:3-6).

3. But his own genius and temper were a superb instrument for the use made of them by the Spirit of the risen Christ. He was essentially a seeker for righteousness (Phil. 3:6, 9). And his will was under the control of an intellect peculiarly sincere, rigorous and penetrating. While he was a Pharisee he lived a most consistent life as the product of that system, but he never upbraids himself with the sins of his class, their self-seeking and their hypocrisy. He was a strong, masterful man who had no useless ideas in his mind, but wrought his convictions into life. Since the law was a divine system there must be no trifling with it. The will of God is final. So Saul the Pharisee was a persecutor of no ordinary violence (Gal. 1:13).

Study 16: The Manifold Gospel

Second Day: The Pauline Conception of Christ

1. Saul discovered in the Christian communities revolution at work like a heady wine, and it was bursting the old bottles. So he who can do nothing by halves grows ruthless and continues so till the moment when the Son of God appears to him. Then he is shattered, and he requires some years of retirement to adjust himself to his new conditions. But in converting a man God does not remake his inborn disposition and type of thought and activity. He simply turns the old nature with its capacities towards new ideals. So Paul is like Saul in continuing to live for righteousness, and in putting into practice what he knows to be the will of God.

2. Christ now takes the place of the law. He is Himself the will of God summing up all the divine nature (Rom. 10:4). Love to a person takes the place of obedience to the letter of a precept, and this shows itself in a life of love to others (Rom. 13:10; Gal. 5:14). Christ is the personal source of righteousness, becoming a fountain of divine grace to the persecutor who lives as a new creature in Christ Jesus. His religion and theology lie in germ in this miracle of love. What an irreparable blunder was made by the representatives of the law when they put to death the Messiah of Israel. The vision of the risen Christ utterly discredited that whole system of righteousness, and now the great alternative is presented, either the law or grace (Gal. 2:21). Two facts, the cross and the resurrection, contain the sum of his gospel, for thereby a new order of grace has been established. Preaching out of his own experience he finds his theme in the risen Christ who has transmuted the curse of the cross into an instrument of glory. With Him he also is dead to the old and alive to the new (Gal. 6:14, 15).

3. The apostle to the Gentiles did not fail to expand his gospel as experience presented new problems to be solved by the trained intellect of the thinker, the religious ideals of the seer, or the dauntless hope of the statesman-missionary. Christ still is the sum of all things. As Paul's view of the world and the Church widens so does his conception of Christ become exalted. He is seen to be the Crown of the universe, the Head of the Church, the full expression of the divine nature (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:18, 19). The network of congregations throughout the Roman Empire is the visible expression of the body of the Lord. By faith in and love to Him each believer is united to Jesus Christ the Head, and thus becomes a part of the body, living a new life of righteousness through His Spirit.

Study 16: The Manifold Gospel

Third Day: The Epistle to the Hebrews

1. There can be no doubt that the author of the epistle to the Hebrews was much influenced by the circle of Pauline ideas, but no less certainly does he present a type of religious thought which is distinctively his own. Paul regards the Mosaic law as a system of righteousness. Hebrews treats it as ritual ordinance. If Paul is the statesman whose aim is to spread the Kingdom of Christ the living Source of true righteousness, the author of this epistle is a devotional spirit whose religion finds its fullest expression in worship.

2. The aim of Hebrews is to prove that Christianity is the perfect religion because it gives complete access to the presence of the Holy God in fellowship with whom eternal life consists. But a great contrast runs through the epistle. There are two worlds, that where God dwells, the pure heavenly temple, the realm of the permanent and the perfect; and the present world of the seen, smitten with sin, a mere shadow cast from the realities of the world of light, shifting "sands marbled with moon and cloud" (Heb. 4:9; 10:1; 12:22, 27, 28). But the present is most attractive to many of the author's readers. Their faith in the worth of the unseen is not strong enough and the anchor of their hope is dragging (Heb. 3:12; 6:3-12, 18, 19).

3. The argument proceeds from certain assumptions accepted by his readers—that Jesus lived a life of human sympathy on earth (Heb. 2:1, 13-18), and was proved to be the Messiah (1:1-4; 3:1), and that after their baptism they had received gifts of the Holy Spirit (6:4, 5). Now what is involved in these facts? First, that Jesus who lived a life on earth touched with a feeling of our infirmities has bridged the two worlds by a new and living way as the Captain of the faithful (Heb. 2:10; 10:20; 12:1, 2).

Secondly, His sacrifice puts an end to all other sacrifices, because of the Person who offered it—the eternal Son—and the spirit in which it was offered—perfect obedience to His Father's will (Heb. 1:2, 3; 9:14; 10:5-14). Finally, as the merciful and faithful High Priest (the great Intercessor) He brings His brethren within the range of God's pardoning influence and sanctifies them as true worshipers (10:10, 14, 22). Thus they become heirs of the unseen world (2:5-9), citizens of the true Zion (12:22). Meanwhile they live here in faith, which is itself a proof of the reality of the heavenly world (11:1), and steady themselves on the promises of God and their hope (6:17-20). They have further assurance in the life of Jesus on earth who is the personal Guarantee of the covenant (7:22), and in their foretaste of powers of the world to come (2:4; 6:4, 5).

Study 16: The Manifold Gospel

Fourth Day: First Peter and James

1. The First Epistle of Peter has affinities with the Pauline conceptions and those of Hebrews, though the author does not move in the lofty regions of spiritual thought which those writers and the author of the fourth gospel enjoy to traverse. Peter may be called the prophet of the new Israel, a man with a frank nature, open to every generous impulse, and moved by the Spirit of God. His epistle has reminiscences of the human life of Christ, a memory of surpassing loveliness, whose moral beauty has traced on every one who saw Him an ineffaceable impression of holiness (1 Peter 1:13-19; 2:21-25). Peter thinks of Jesus Christ primarily as the exalted Messiah, whose resurrection has made divine salvation and grace effective, and the Christian's hope secure (1:3-9). Jesus introduces the believer to God, in whose presence he henceforth abides (2:9, 10, 25). Peter speaks like an Old Testament prophet who has drunk deeply of the teaching of Jesus. God is the faithful Creator but also the Holy Father of the New Israel (1:17; 4:19). Holiness is as essential to the God of Peter as to the Jehovah of Isaiah (Isa. 6). Steeped in prophetic thought Peter teaches that the Church is the new Israel, which has been delivered out of the bondage of its Egypt by the sacrifice of its paschal Lamb (1: 18,19). But the exalted Messiah was also the Servant of the Lord whose face was marred by awful blows, albeit with healing for those who follow Him (2:21-24); and that perfect endurance becomes the example for every Christian under suffering. Thus the human life of Jesus meant more for Peter than it did for Paul, or even for the author of Hebrews.

2. The epistle of James is the least distinctly evangelical of all the writings of the New Testament, the gospel having come to its author as the fulfilling of the old covenant very much in the sense of Matt. 5:17—6:18. He seems to have passed from the old life in Judaism to the life in the new Israel without any violent rupture. The law of Christ is the perfect law of liberty, but it demands serious moral effort for its fulfillment (1:25; 2:8, 10, 12, 14). In opposition to the old practical Pharisaism which deemed outward service to code morality sufficient, provided there was assent to certain religious propositions, James like his Master demands living faith (2:14-26) which shows itself in works. "Pure religion," *i. e.*, "truest ritual service," is not religious formalism, but a service of practical love (1:27). This is the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ who is risen to glory, and who will soon return to right all wrongs (2:1; 5:7, 8). This life of true faith is begotten by the will of God through the preaching of the word of truth (1:18), and its essence is heavenly wisdom (3:13-18).

Study 16: The Manifold Gospel

Fifth Day: Mark, Matthew and Luke

1. Turning to the synoptic gospels we discover that in spite of a great deal of common material each presents one aspect of the life of Christ for different readers. Mark is the earliest of the three. It opens abruptly, and the close is lost, but there is no mistaking its purpose. Jesus the strong Son of God moves in mature manhood across the few months of His public earthly life, leaving an enduring impression of His power. Brief, vivid, picturesque, the story shows a Person in whom divine majesty is combined with human compassion commingled at times with scorn or indignation (3:1-5; 4:35-41). The effect is produced not by what we hear Jesus say, but by what we see Him do. This was the gospel preached to the ordinary man of the Roman world, to whom it offered a new King and a new kingdom. The strong, pitiful, dominant Son of Man, so human in His tenderness, so divine in His strength, wears in the gospel of Mark "the mien and countenance of authority."

2. Matthew's readers are evidently Jewish Christians of the Western Dispersion who are in a difficult environment. They seem to be subjected to the taunts of Jews and possibly of Gentiles that Jesus is a discredited Messiah. So Matthew presents Jesus as the true Messiah of prophecy. He roams through the Old Testament, finding passage after passage which foretells the coming Kingdom of God and its Lord, and gets its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is the royal Messiah (Matt. 1: 20-25, 2:2) in His birth, His opening ministry, His legislation (Matt. 5-7), His claim. Out of the remnant of old Israel He forms the new Israel, His Church (Matt. 16:18). This is a conception which along with that of the suffering Servant, also fulfilled by Jesus in His death, forms the distinctive contribution of Isaiah to the prophetic thought (Isa. 10: 20-22; 11:1-9). Jesus is thus the true Messiah, and His followers the true Israel, heirs to the promises of Jehovah.

3. Luke writes for Gentiles. A historian he traces in the gospel the origins of Jesus, His home, His growth, His manhood. As Jesus is made known His perfect human nature discloses all that it is possible for mortal man to conceive of God. He is the Son of God just because He is the Flower of humanity. "Heaven stoops to earth, earth rises to heaven." Jesus is the Saviour of the world, of the Gentile, the prodigal, the sinner. No gospel is so full of sympathy for the poor, the distressed, the broken in mind and body. In the Acts the same author sets forth Jesus continuing in His Spirit as the risen Lord to do among His disciples the work which He had begun on earth. The kingdom extends over the civilized world under His guidance (Acts 1:8).

Study 16: The Manifold Gospel

Sixth Day: The Johannine Conception of the Gospel

1. The Johannine literature had its home in Asia Minor, where new problems faced Christianity. Men were denying that Christ had come in the flesh, claiming that He was little more than an angelic spirit who had descended upon Jesus at the baptism and had left Him before the crucifixion. They ignored the necessity of redemption from sin, and interpreted the resurrection as a purely spiritual or intellectual experience. Some desired to live a free life of the Spirit in the enjoyment of their own ecstatic experiences, and did not see any need for going back to the historic Jesus. Others again echoed the common objection of Jew and Gentile, that Jesus could not have been the Messiah, or His own people would have recognized Him (1 John 1:8-10; 4:1-3; John 16:13-15; 5:28, 29; 1:11-13).

2. A gospel was needed for such an environment. The gospel and epistles profess to be a record of personal experience (John 1:14; 1 John 1:1). The disciple had discovered that Jesus was nothing less than the eternal Son of God the Father, and from Him he had got life (John 20:31). That earthly life unfolded a nature one with the Father in life (5:26), thought (5:19), will (4:34), power (10:28-30), love (17:24). What others sought concerning the origin and maintenance of the world in the doctrine of the Logos or divine reason, this writer found in a Person. He solved for him all the riddles of life, for as the Word of God Incarnate He uttered God's will to the world, and accounted for its source and issue in God's eternal love (John 1:1-4, 14, 18; 1 John 1:1). In Jesus Christ we see the Father's nature. John thus starts with the historic Jesus. All the growing knowledge that comes through the Spirit of God will simply be an expansion of the divine mind that His disciples found in Him (John 16:13-15). He also as the propitiation for sin is proof to the world of the Father's love (John 1:29; 3:16; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; 5:6).

3. The saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Son of God which brings life is no mere intellectual assent, but is based on love. Christ is a fountain of divine love, welling up from the Father's own heart, and only he whose nature responds to this divine love of which His life on earth was the incarnation, can really believe on Him as the Son of God (1 John 4:9, 10, 14, 15, 16; 5:1, 4, 5, 10-12).

4. Similar conceptions occur in the Apocalypse. Jesus Christ has conquered the satanic power of the world, the dying throes of which are still manifest in the awful struggle between the Church on the earth and its persecutors (19:20). Jesus by His resurrection has overcome death and Hades (20:14), He is the living One (1:18), the eternal Son of God (2:18), the Beginning of the creation of God (3:14), the Divine Word (19:13), the Lamb of God slain (29 times in Rev.) who has redeemed the saints to an inheritance in the new Jerusalem, and the Judge of all (3:5, 12, 14-22). No more triumphant and beautiful conclusion for the gospel could be conceived than the last two chapters of Revelation, in which a glorious imagination leads us through the city of God, where mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Study 16: The Manifold Gospel

Seventh Day: The Gospel and the Terms on Which It is Received

1. Like a beam of light Jesus Christ irradiates the New Testament, but each writer's experience was a prism through which a pure color is refracted. All the epistles, different as they are, assume that the teaching they set forth is the mind of Christ. They profess merely to elucidate what Jesus Christ was. The *mind of Christ* according to Paul consists in His self-abasement for our sakes, the infinitely rich one having become poor (Phil. 2:6-11); according to Hebrews it was His obedience to the will of His Father in offering His human nature as a sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:5-14; 9:14); according to John it was His love as shown in His delight to do the will of His Father by laying down His life for the world (John 10:17, 18); according to Peter it was also that the Christ suffered in the flesh on our behalf (1 Peter 4:1); and all these agree with the synoptic gospels, which portray Jesus Christ as the Servant of the Lord, the law of whose kingdom is that rank goes with service (Mark 8:34, 35; 10:45).

2. What then is this gospel, this faith that overcometh the world? (1 John 5:4.) It is all summed up in that Person, Jesus Christ. He is not to be accounted for as other human beings are, for He does not belong to this realm. He comes from another world, bringing with Him a true knowledge of our unseen Father and of His purposes with the world of men. His sojourn on earth in a true human nature revealed to us the perfection and sympathy of God. His death showed forth His love and holiness. His resurrection proved His power, and giving the world a glimpse of His essential majesty was also a promise of the future. The unseen is no longer to be feared, for it is the home where Christ is even now; and through those realms a pierced human hand will ever lead us, for Jesus Christ will always reflect for us in His human face all the glory of God that it will be possible for human beings to contemplate. Jesus Christ an eternal living Person is thus the Word of God to the world of men. Through Him the Spirit of God comes to us reconciling us to God and making us His sons.

3. The terms on which man receives this gospel are faith, love, trust, or obedience (see Study 6, 6th and 7th days). These are really the same, and denote the attitude of mind or will whereby we allow this great Person to lead us into the presence of God. The first disciples came to Jesus and abode with Him (John 1:35-49), they obeyed Him (Mark 10:28), they learned from Him how to pray (Luke 11:1), they trusted Him even when they could not understand (Mark 8:32, 33; 9:24; Luke 9:23; John 14:1, R. V. margin). So we to-day shall discover that Jesus will lift us out of our old life, bring us pardon, and introduce us as holy worshipers into the presence of God, if we pray to Him, seek to have His mind in us, and do His will which is love to God and man.

PART III.

THE CREDIBILITY OF THE APOSTOLIC GOSPEL

Study 17: The Trustworthiness of the Gospels

First Day: The Jesus of History According to Naturalism

1. We have seen the richness and power of the Christians' life, and their belief that nothing less than their gospel of the supernatural Christ was commensurate with their extraordinary experience. Their conceptions were very daring, for no figure more majestic could be conceived than their Lord who was the Way, the Truth and the Life, whose death on the cross had made the forgiveness of their sins possible, whose resurrection had demonstrated that He was the eternal Son of God, whose Spirit was in their midst, and who would return to be the Judge of the world.

2. We may by way of contrast consider the explanation of the rise of the Christian gospel which naturalism supplies. We are told that "no process of criticism can restore the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus," and that only five or ten sayings and events of the gospels can be relied on as absolutely credible ("Encyclopædia Biblica," articles "Son of Man" and "Gospels"). But when this class of critic unwraps the myths, legends and "church" conceptions in which Jesus has been embalmed by pious devotion, some such gaunt form as this appears, though "the actual historical picture of Jesus is inaccessible."

3. Jesus had much sympathy with John the Baptist, but there is nothing historical in the gospel narratives of His baptism, and though the Temptation may have been an actual crisis in His own life, it has "more or less mythic embroidery" as it stands ("Encyclopædia Biblica," article "Temptation of Jesus"). Jesus preached the Kingdom of God expecting at first that His ideal would soon be realized on earth, and by His wonderful words, His great powers, and His character He created a deep impression. But He never put Himself forward as a part of His message, and it is doubtful whether He used the term Son of Man of Himself at all, and especially in the earlier part of His career. In fact "He did not look upon Himself as the absolutely perfect Man" ("Encyclopædia Biblica," article "Son of Man," § 47).

4. Disillusioned when after a few months of popularity the enthusiasm of the people for Him began to wane, He changed His teaching as to the Kingdom of God, abandoned any hope of establishing it on earth, and saw that a martyr's death was inevitable. Then probably the role of Messiah was suggested to His mind, and He began to prophesy that He would return on clouds of glory and inaugurate a new reign of God from heaven.

5. He was put to death and was buried, and His body underwent decay, while His disciples returned to their homes in Galilee. Soon, however, stimulated by visions the origin of which it is difficult to explain, they came to believe that He was still alive, and would ere long reappear. In this faith they went forth to bid their fellow countrymen repent and prepare to receive the returning Messiah ("Encyclopædia Biblica," article "Resurrection").

Study 17: The Trustworthiness of the Gospels

Second Day: The Real Creators of Christianity According to Naturalism

1. But the Jesus of history just outlined was far too narrowly Jewish to become the Lord of the world. Whether He claimed to be the Messiah or not, the gospel preached by the first disciples was nationalistic; they had no interest in the outside world, and in fact did not believe that the present age had many years to run (Acts 3:13-26; 5:30-32).

2. A change first came, they tell us, with the Apostle Paul, who did not know Jesus in the flesh, but through a vision was persuaded that He was the Messiah and Son of God, Saviour for Jew and Gentile (2 Cor. 12:1-10; Gal. 1:15-17). The historic Jesus thus disappears from the gospel and instead of His ethical message of the kingdom, and the fervid preaching of His first disciples that the Messiah would soon return to judgment, the Gentiles are taught Jesus Christ, crucified and risen (1 Cor. 15:1-4). But this gospel was just what was needed to appeal to the Western mind, especially when reinforced by the impressive personality of Paul.

3. After Paul's death this interpretation of Christ spread rapidly, till at the close of the first century an unknown author, changing it slightly to suit the requirements of that age, gave it classic expression in the fourth gospel. "The bestowal upon Jesus of the title Son of God, which He did not claim, and probably could not have understood, marked a step forward. When He was lifted up from earth and made a God He drew all men unto Himself. . . . . It may be questioned whether without this deification it would have become historically possible for Him to dispense His spiritual gifts through the ages" ("Encyclopædia Biblica," "Son of God," § 25). "While we may call the fourth gospel unhistorical, we must not forget that just through its constructive work did Christianity itself first become a factor in history" (Holtzmann).

4. It is thus clear that according to naturalism Jesus is not the sole, nor perhaps even the most important factor in the Christianity of the New Testament. All that He did seems to have been to give a certain impulse towards a higher and purer conception of God and man. The Christian gospel which converted the world is the gospel of Jesus, Paul, and the unknown fourth evangelist. Is it not then one of the injustices of history that Jesus of Nazareth has been raised to such an exclusive pinnacle?

Study 17: The Trustworthiness of the Gospels

Third Day: The Testimony of Paul as to the Primitive Gospel

1. The New Testament like the rocks carries in itself sure traces of its age, parts being undoubtedly early. It will not permit the assumption of a "Christ of the Church" without sufficient spiritual antecedents. When we read the undisputed epistles of Paul we discover that the gospel which absorbed his interest had been in existence before he was converted. What is the meaning of the earnestness of Gal. 2:2-10 unless the most influential section of Christendom felt that it owed nothing to the apostle to the Gentiles? That section carried with it the prestige of primitive faith. They were the authorities (Gal. 1:17; 2:6; cf. 1 Cor. 1:12; 2 Cor. 11:16ff.). Yet Paul asserts vehemently that there is and can be only one gospel, and that the Jerusalem apostles agreed with him therein (Gal. 1:9; 2:7-9).

2. And in writing to the Romans, a church with the founding and promotion of which he had nothing to do (Rom. 1:8-15), and which was at the time he wrote famous throughout Christendom, Paul sends them the most elaborate account of his gospel, not as something new, but as a gift in which they might rejoice (Rom. 1:15-17). Does not Rom. 6:17 involve that the gospel had taken a definite shape, different in no essentials from what they then believed before the church of Rome was founded? Not improbably there has been a tendency to overestimate the influence of Paul upon the early Church, but this is not because he asserts his preëminence. Nowhere does he appear except as loyal to the whole brotherhood, none insists more strongly than he upon the unity of the Body of Christ (Gal. 2:2; Eph. *passim*). But he also is emphatic that the essentials of the one gospel came to him not from tradition but from the risen Christ (Gal. 1:1).

4. Here then we have solid ground from which to take a survey of early Christian beliefs. For this letter which contains his testimony, though possibly dating as late as 57, carries us back at least fifteen, perhaps twenty years (Gal. 1:18—2:1), the tendency of recent criticism being to place Paul's conversion shortly after the death of Jesus. Thus the essentials of Paul's gospel, which according to his own testimony not only remained unchanged but were accepted by the other apostles, were preached within a decade of Christ's death in various parts of the civilized world.

Study 17: The Trustworthiness of the Gospels

Fourth Day: The Earliest Gospel

1. Have we any traces elsewhere in the New Testament as to the substance of this pre-Pauline gospel? It is admitted by very radical critics that the discourses of Peter in Acts contain authentic accounts of primitive Christian beliefs ("Encyclopædia Biblica," article "Acts of the Apostles," § 14). (See especially Acts 2:22-36; 3:13-26; 4:10-12; 5:29-32.) Jesus is the risen Lord, the Prince of Life, the Saviour, the Servant whose death has brought forgiveness, the Messiah who fulfills prophecy, and the Judge of quick and dead (Acts 10:36-43). This contains all the fundamental beliefs that are more fully developed in the epistles.

2. A very great deal lies behind the use of the word "Lord" as applied to Jesus (Acts 2:36), and is implied in the worship of Jesus (Acts 7:59). The brethren glorify the Man Jesus though in the eyes of the Jew the deification of the creature is the height of blasphemy. But in the New Testament it is impossible to trace any gradual process from hero worship into deification and finally into the entirely transcendental Person of the epistles. The earliest Christian worship involves fundamentally the same view of Christ that comes in later teaching. Further, in Acts and Paul and the other epistles this object of divine worship is the Jesus who once lived on earth (Acts 4:10; 10:37, 38; Phil. 2:5-11).

3. These words of one who belongs to the radical wing of critics are important: "It was quite natural that prayers should be offered up to God by Jesus, with Jesus, in Jesus, and very little time can have elapsed before prayers were poured forth to Jesus Himself, if indeed this was not done from the beginning, inasmuch as He was ever present with His own, ready to hear and able to grant their requests. In truth one is at a loss to see how Christianity could have failed to be the worship of Christ, and it is nowise rash to hold that their worship in a certain sense preceded, sustained and inspired the work of Christian thought respecting the person of the Redeemer. The Christian's conversation was with his Lord in heaven; if he distinguished God from his Christ he none the less beheld God in his Christ, so close and indissoluble was the union of the two; he prayed to God in praying to Christ, though the solemn supplications of the congregation were addressed to God through Christ. Jesus was, as it were, the face of God turned towards man. Christian piety went on placing the Saviour at the highest pinnacle of glory, seeking and finding God in Him, adoring Him in heaven and striving to imitate the example He had set it upon earth, and drawing its force from this twofold character of its object, the divine and the human" (Loisy, "L'Evangile et l'Eglise," 251, 252, 3d edition). Is not the most reasonable explanation of this given in Luke 24:45-49; John 20:26-29? On this subject the reader of German may consult T. Zahn's essay on "Die Anbetung Jesu im Zeitalter der Apostel" in his "Skizzen aus dem Leben der Alten Kirche."

Study 17: The Trustworthiness of the Gospels

Fifth Day: Results of Recent Criticism of the Synoptic Gospels

1. On turning to the results of the sanest modern scholarship with respect to our gospels, it is not hard to see that they increase the difficulties of a naturalistic interpretation of the Person of Christ, but support the apostolic view which has already been studied. These points seem to be agreed upon.

2. (a) At the basis of our present synoptic gospels there lie two written apostolic sources—a Petrine tradition, which is represented most fully by the Gospel of Mark, and a Matthæan collection of the discourses of Jesus, from which the gospels of Matthew and Luke take their words of the Lord.

3. (b) The most authentic portions of the gospels according to criticism are the material common to the three gospels, and the sayings common to Matthew and Luke. Now in these are included the greatest works and the highest claims of Jesus (Mark 1:9-11; 2:5, 20, 28; 4:35-41; 5:1-20, 21-43; 6:31-44; 8:27-31; 9:2-8; 12:35-37; Matt. 11:27). These are only the most important passages of a great deal of common material, but they cover the stupendous facts of Christ's life.

4. (c) Our present Gospel of Mark, if not the earliest of the three gospels, most certainly gives the closest reproduction of the living Petrine tradition, which was widespread in the Church, and which is embodied also in our gospels of Matthew and Luke. In its present shape our second gospel bears the stamp of a writer who was in thorough sympathy with the Christ of the Pauline epistles. It is the Gospel of Jesus the supernatural Person, the Son of God, whose life is a manifestation of divine power. His knowledge is more than human, demons worship Him, He forgives sins, foretells His violent death (2:20), and has divine homage paid Him (15:39).

5. (d) There is a growing tendency to hold that each of the gospels as they now stand was written independently of the others. The author of Luke can hardly have been acquainted with our Gospel of Matthew, and it is improbable that either gospel owes anything to the Gospel of Mark in its present shape. Their similarities are due to common apostolic sources. So apart from these they are in their aims and emphasis three independent narratives of the life of Jesus Christ.

Study 17: The Trustworthiness of Our Gospels

Sixth Day: The Character of Jesus is the Greatest Miracle in the Gospels

1. What is the fundamental characteristic of the Person of Jesus Christ? He is One who combines excessive claims as to divine nature with surpassing self-sacrifice in a true human life. His love to the world of men is such as had never before been known, but the marvel of the sacrifice, according to gospels and epistles, arises from the sinlessness and transcendent dignity of Him who thus gives Himself for men. It is because He is the Son of God that the death of the cross is the heart of the gospel (Phil. 2:5-11; John 10:17, 18; Heb. 1:1-3; 1 Peter 1:19, 20). It is because of the character and majesty of the Son of Man that His service on earth is so priceless (Mark 10:45). All the details of the synoptic gospels are so handled by their authors as to throw into relief this quality of person in the historic Jesus.

2. But this insuperable difficulty is also presented to naturalism—the character of the Jesus of our present gospels. Admittedly the figure in the gospels is the most perfect Person that has ever been delineated. Yet the picture is painted out of the most commonplace colors, and on the simplest possible background. It is a mere peasant life in the obscure province of Palestine. There was nothing in the people, their interests, or their political life to catch the imagination of the world; but out of these surroundings there arises, without the slightest straining after effect, a Person who lives forever in the world's heart. The deepest truths of religion are expressed in the story of the simplest life. His death, the degrading execution of a criminal sentence, becomes invested for the world with far more than the sacredness of martyrdom, or pity for a miscarriage of justice.

3. Finally there is not felt to be any moral incongruity on the part of Jesus in asserting divine prerogatives. He remains a marvel of humility even when He calls all men to Himself. He does not appear absurd in stepping beyond the limits of mortal humanity. Instead of degrading the conception of God when He claims to be divine, there is nowhere a purer monotheism nor a loftier view of the fatherhood of God than just in those parts of the gospels where the transcendent personality of Jesus is most distinctly portrayed (John 4:10-26; 14:1-24). (On this subject see Fairbairn's "Philosophy of the Christian Religion," Book II., Part 1, Chs. 1-3.)

Study 17: The Trustworthiness of Our Gospels

Seventh Day: The Results of Criticism Make the Naturalistic View of Jesus More Difficult

1. Now this Person of Jesus would be sufficiently marvelous if there were only one gospel in which it was depicted, but when we consider the features of the present synoptic gospels and the results of the critical hypothesis now in most vogue, the difficulties of naturalism are vastly increased.

2. If we accept the results already outlined, it is evident that the figure of Jesus Christ as He is in the synoptics already dominated the sources which their writers used, and these sources came from the Apostles Peter and Matthew. So we have in our present gospels the testimony of two of the best possible witnesses of the life of Jesus.

3. But the influence of the person of Jesus Christ is not confined to the material which is common to the three synoptics, or even to two, and which accordingly is usually assigned to these apostolic sources. Many of the incidents peculiar to one gospel, which therefore cannot perhaps be assumed to belong to such widespread tradition, but may have been gathered from a source known only to one evangelist, are imbued as deeply with the Spirit of Jesus—that blending of divine majesty and self-sacrificing love in a perfectly human life—as any parts of the gospels (Matt. 11:28-30; 16:17-20; 25:31-46; Luke 7:36-50; 23:27-32, 34, 39-43).

4. But if the radical critic asserts that we are too credulous in holding that there were two apostolic sources for our gospels, and that we must get down to "the sources of the sources," till finally there will remain only nine passages which "might be called the foundation pillars for a truly scientific life of Jesus" ("Encyclopædia Biblica," "Gospels," § 139), his own position is becoming desperate; for he has to explain how the jejune and disappointed "Jesus of naturalism" grew into the three wonderful independent portraits of our gospels, with aims so different and meant for readers so differently circumstanced. What spirit entered into the souls of these evangelists, or into their intermediate sources, which enabled them to change the ecstatic Prophet of Galilee into the divinely human perfect Ideal of the world's adoration?

Study 18: The Trustworthiness of the Gospels

(Continued)

First Day: Naturalism is Really the Denial of the Apostolic View of the Person of Christ

1. Further, the fourth gospel must heighten our wonder at the creative ingenuity of the early Christians. For the verdict of the Church is that the Johannine Christ is not discrepant from the synoptic Christ. He has appealed to the spiritual understanding of the body of believers as the same, though His Person is portrayed by a more intimate and discerning interpreter. No single evangelist can claim to be either the creator or sole delineator of that harmonious Figure. whose divine supremacy and power are incarnate in a life of perfect human love and beauty.

2. It must in fact be admitted that every one of our gospels as they now stand was written by believers in Jesus Christ as the Divine Messiah. The task of disentangling the Jesus of history from these narratives becomes hopeless, for each naturalistic critic finds simply as much in these gospels as his preconceived conception of Jesus will permit him to discover, and the tendency is, as we have seen, to reduce the historical elements to a minimum.

3. But he is faced with this formidable difficulty. Long before any of our gospel sources were written down there was the gospel that Paul preached, and there was the gospel of the Jewish Christian church which was older than that of Paul, while behind that we have the primitive preaching of Peter outlined in Acts. And through all these we see not the Jesus of the naturalistic critics, but the supernatural Son of God, Saviour and Lord.

4. Naturalism is in reality a denial of the point of view from which the earliest known gospel was preached. It is beside the mark to appeal to Paul in order to show how the gospel could become independent of the historic Jesus. This will come up more fully in a later study. Though Paul did think of Jesus as the risen Son of God, there was, as we have seen, in the background of his thought the real human life of Jesus on earth. What has to be explained is how a Person, whose inmost quality and character are the same as those of the Christ of the Pauline epistles, is given the splendidly perfect human life of the gospels. The actual gospels carrying their detailed environment of Jesus are far more wonderful than the Pauline epistles. One and the same Person pervades gospels and epistles. The gospels emphasize His earthly career, the epistles consider the risen and eternal Christ.

Study 18: The Trustworthiness of the Gospels

Second Day: The Miraculous in the Gospels

1. It is thus the simplest solution of the difficulties which emerge from a consideration of our gospels if we accept them as presenting a trustworthy portraiture of the Jesus of history. But does this mean that all the incidents in that life are to be accepted as historical also? There are some scholars, who cannot fairly be classed as naturalistic, who yet hold that parts of our gospels have been idealized under the influence of later church conceptions or legend. They find traces of such influence in the heightening of the miraculous, the narratives of the birth and infancy of Jesus and the resurrection, while they also believe that Jesus was mistaken in His hope for a speedy return in glory. We shall consider these.

2. We are told that Jesus refused to work "signs" (Mark 8:12). This agrees with the incident in His temptation (Matt. 4:5-7). This was certainly so, for both in the synoptists and in John He lays little value on the faith which is based on "signs" (John 2:23, 24). Jesus never works miracles for display. They are kept primarily for the circles where there is faith, and there they become a part of His gospel, not at all to compel those to believe who would not accept His words. It is impossible to separate the words from the works of Jesus and to call only the former historical. That is simply to destroy the Jesus of the gospels.

3. Nor is there any historical justification for separating the miracles into two classes, in order to admit that Jesus drove out the demons and healed the diseased, but to deny that He raised the dead, stilled the storm, or fed the five thousand. The attempt is made to explain the nature miracles as embellishments of events due to natural causes, or as the outcome of figurative speech, parable, or allegory. The gospels know nothing of this distinction. All miracles are equally the natural and masterful works of a supernatural Person (Mark 1:27; 2:12; 4:38; 5:23). It is the Person rather than the act who excites wonder.

4. Further the greatest miracles occur in the oldest part of the gospel tradition, which the best scholarship to-day assigns to the Apostle Peter. Thus the conception of Christ as Lord over nature became embedded in the narrative of an eye-witness within twenty-five years of the death of Jesus.

5. In addition to this the brethren themselves felt that they were endued with supernatural divine power. They had the Holy Spirit with them, the energy of God Himself. They believed that this Spirit was the source of their Lord's life on earth and of His miraculous endowment (Luke 1:35; 3:22; 10:21). Miracles formed an essential element in their total impression of the lordship of Jesus, whom they invested with all the attributes of Jehovah. Did they not contribute to this investment?

Study 18: The Trustworthiness of the Gospels

Third Day: The Narratives of the Infancy

1. The birth of Jesus by the Holy Spirit from a virgin mother (Matt. 1:18-20; Luke 1:34, 35) is incredible in these days to many who find in such a narrative not only a phenomenon without any precedent, but one which seems to them to rob Jesus of His human nature. Of late the criticism of the portions of the gospels in which this event is embedded has become very acute. But the negative criticism has been more successful as usual in the destructive process than in its constructive theories to account for the origin of the records.

2. These are the chief arguments against the virgin birth: (a) It is not referred to in Mark, the earliest gospel, in the gospel of John, nor in any of the epistles. (b) The narratives of Matthew and Luke are conflicting and full of legendary material. (c) If they are true "we have lost the Christ who can feel with us because He is one with us in physical structure and composition."

3. To these objections answer may be made: (a) The subject matter is not such as would early become current in the gospel, for it would be known only to the family circle. The fourth evangelist omits it because he writes from his own experience of the life of Jesus. (b) Matthew and Luke are independent of each other, and so are two witnesses to the story. In themselves the narratives which contain the event bear strong evidence of authenticity, for they preserve for us (especially Luke) a wonderfully beautiful and true picture of the finest piety of Israel, which had passed away long before they were written down (Luke 1:46-55, 67-79). In these verses the ancient prophetic ideal is enshrined which disappeared as it was fulfilled in the gospel. What finer as well as historically more probable picture of the home circle from which the Messiah was to come could be drawn? (c) The Christ of the gospels is more than our Example. He is Revealer of God and Redeemer of men as well.

3. If they are unhistorical, whence did the narratives come? Critics are hopelessly at variance. Some say from a Jewish source, others from a Gentile origin. (1) But they did not spring from a Jewish source, for (a) Is. 7:14 is not sufficient to account for the subsequent structure, especially as (b) the Hebrew regarded marriage as honorable and virginity not a peculiar state of blessedness, and (c) the Messiah, in so far as He was a human figure, was to be a king of Davidic descent as well as Son of God. (2) They were not of Gentile origin, for the Christian mind revolted from the polluting stories of the births of demigods and heroes, and Jesus was never regarded as less than fully divine. (3) It is not due to dogmatic motives, for it is never used to account for the sinlessness of Jesus, nor did He deny His natural descent (Mark 3:33-35).

4. The meaning of the narratives is that Jesus is of supernatural origin. As he was unique in His life and resurrection so was He in His birth. He cannot be accounted for as other men are. He was a new creation, even as He was also the first fruits of those that slept (1 Cor. 15:20-22; Rom. 5:12-21). (On this subject see W. M. Ramsay's "Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?" Sanday in article "Jesus Christ," Hastings's D. B. Lobstein's "Virgin Birth of Christ" is the best presentation of the negative view. F. H. Chase's "The Supernatural Element in Our Lord's Earthly Life" is valuable.)

Study 18: The Trustworthiness of the Gospels

Fourth Day: Was Jesus Mistaken About the Future?

1. It is often stated that Jesus shared the belief of His disciples that He would soon return on clouds of glory to establish His kingdom in power, but that in this He was, like them, mistaken. These passages are among others supposed to justify such an opinion (Mark 9:1; Matt. 10:23; 24:32-36; 26:64; Luke 12:35-40, 46). In addition to these words there was the widespread early belief of the Church that Jesus would be revealed before long in majesty. This we are told is to be explained only by Jesus having taught it.

2. Such a view can only be met by somewhat lengthened treatment. What was Jesus' own idea of the nature and growth of its kingdom? (See Matt. 4:8-10; 10:17-22; 13:24-50; 24:9-14; Mark 4:26-29; 14:9; Luke 17:21.) From these we gather that His kingdom was to be the spiritual rule of God within the hearts of men, growing slowly and with much opposition, but brought even at the expense of persecution to the outside world, and containing elements of good and evil as it found concrete expression in the earthly communities of His followers.

3. Jesus taught that this kingdom was to be the new Israel, and with His own rejection as Messiah at the hands of the Jewish hierarchy and their persecution of His followers, would come divine judgment on Jerusalem and the Jewish nation as such. The spiritual Israel, His Church, would take the place of the old Israel (Luke 12:54-59; 19:27, 28, 39-44; 20:16-19). Much anxiety and heart searching would thereby be caused to His disciples, for they were Jews for whom the nation had till now been the theocracy; and the wrench of parting would be very severe. It is with this immediate trial in view that Jesus gives His warnings as to the future. His kingdom is not of this earth; it is not political; His followers must not allow it to become entangled in the national misfortunes of doomed Judaism. So they are to escape when they see Jerusalem invested by armies (Mark 13:14-23). His kingdom will outlast the day of divine judgment on the nation that has rejected its Messiah (Mark 13:7-10).

Study 18: The Trustworthiness of the Gospels

Fifth Day: Was Jesus Mistaken About the Future? (Continued.)

1. The disciples could as little think of the present world without Jerusalem and the old nation of Jehovah's choice, as the world of the middle ages could have imagined it Romeless. What would be worth living for on earth after the destruction of Zion? That would be a chapter of God's government closed. Nothing more could be done with this world. It was the end of the old dispensation and the beginning of a new order with a new sphere for the final kingdom. The Day of the Lord would have come.

2. But Jesus did not teach thus. He deals it is true with the fortunes that are awaiting His Jewish disciples in the national reverses so soon to come, but He tells them also that the gospel has an earthly mission beyond Judaism (Mark 14:9). Of its career in that period He says little or nothing, except that from the day of His death on He will be coming in power to judge the hostile world and to encourage His own (Mark 8:38; 9:1; Matt. 28:18-20). He also teaches that this world will have a catastrophic ending, for when the earth will have made final trial of the gospel and its judgment is complete, He Himself will with majesty inaugurate the kingdom in a new sphere (Mark 13:24-27, 31; Matt. 25:31; 26:64). But when that will be not even the Son of Man knows (Mark 13:32).

3. Much of the imagery which Jesus employs is drawn from the Old Testament conception of the Day of the Lord (Mark 13:24-27; Isa. 13:9-13; 24:21-23; 34:4; Jer. 4:23ff.; Dan. 7:9, 10; Joel 2:10, 11), and it is a wrong method to interpret all His language literally. As He used parables and symbol to convey truths which were beyond the comprehension of His followers at the stage of their spiritual development in Galilee or Judæa, so He did in regard to the future of the kingdom. He took the old prophetic terms which conveyed a permanent truth and made them the vehicle of His deeper fulfillment of it. Only experience could teach them all that was wrapped up in them, and to-day we are still learning more of their import than previous generations knew. This was His method in applying to Himself the title, "Son of Man." It was also His pædagogical principle in foretelling the consummation of His kingdom in the "Day of the Lord." Jesus then was not mistaken about the future.

Study 18: The Trustworthiness of the Gospels

Sixth Day: Paul's Account of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

1. Many scholars, who are not inclined to deny that Jesus Christ is a living Person to-day in a different sense from the dead who are even now enjoying immortality, assert that there is so much legendary material woven into the gospel narratives of the resurrection of Jesus as to make the event itself there recorded incredible. Fortunately for us we are able to check and elucidate the gospel stories with a very direct and ample defence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ by Paul in 1 Cor. 15: 1-8, 20, 35-54.

2. This chapter is written to counteract the Greek notion prevalent in Corinth that the resurrection was a spiritual event already past, when the believer rose from his old life in the world to his new life in the spirit. The apostle bases all his hope of his own future life on the resurrection of Jesus (15:12-19). He does not entertain the Pharisaic view of a return from the dead to present earthly conditions, for frail, decaying flesh and blood cannot inherit that eternal kingdom (15:50). But it will be inherited by living persons who have their own former bodies, though flesh has given way to a new material which cannot be described, but will by reason of God's infinite power be suitable to the new spiritual sphere (15:35-49).

3. The proof of this belief is the fact that Jesus Christ Himself died and was buried and rose (therefore left the grave empty 15:3, 4). His risen body is the first of the great harvest of the resurrection (15:20). But Paul never describes its nature. He simply states that it is the most certain of facts that He returned, and was recognized by His friends as an objective reality, and that He held personal intercourse with himself (15:5-10). No better historical witness could be demanded by these Corinthians. Whether he knew of the appearances to the women we cannot say, but their testimony would be of small weight with such a church. However, He was seen by the great apostle to whom one wing of this church looked up (1 Cor. 1:12), also by the original apostolic body, then by a multitude some of whom were still alive, then by the leader of Jewish Christianity, again by the apostles, and lastly, as though after all the other appearances were over, by the apostle to the Gentiles. What better testimony could that Church, or any church, want?

Study 18: The Trustworthiness of the Gospels

Seventh Day: The Gospel Narratives of the Resurrection

1. On turning to the gospel narratives we are faced with serious differences and difficulties. How many angels were at the tomb? (Matt. 28:2-4; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4.) To whom did Jesus first appear? (Matt. 28:9; John 20:13-16; Luke 24:34.) Where did Jesus meet His disciples, in Galilee (Matt. 28:10) or in Jerusalem (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19), or in both? (John 21:1.) A number of these difficulties do not defy reasonable explanation. But what is to be said of Luke 24:39-43 when compared with 1 Cor. 15:50-53?

2. We have already seen reasons why Paul's list of the appearances of the risen Christ may not have been exhaustive, and he also agrees with all the gospels that the grave was found empty on the resurrection morning. Whatever be the differences all agree upon that. Further, to whomsoever or wheresoever appearances came, the narratives agree that they were objective manifestations of Jesus, and that while His appearance was wonderfully changed, His disciples recognized Him, and held real though intermittent fellowship with Him. This is also quite in line with the revelation which Paul received (1 Cor. 15:8).

3. It must be admitted that there are in these narratives many details which we cannot explain. And we can easily see why. The event was so extraordinary and the emotion so intense that the tradition was not clear. The story would be told in the language and thought of the women or first disciples, who in their bewilderment might be unable to recount exactly what happened. It is remarkable that the most self-consistent story is given in the fourth gospel by one who shows the deepest spiritual comprehension of the meaning of Christ's life.

4. But with all their differences there is essential agreement, and the very confusion is witness to the truth of the tremendous fact with which the earthly career of Jesus culminated. What finer harmony could be found with Paul's thought than the beautiful stories of Luke 24:13-35; John 20:1-23? and what truer explanation of his doctrine in 2 Cor. 3:17, 18 than the incidents of Luke 24:32; John 20:21-23?

5. Finally the fact of the resurrection of Jesus is required to account for the early faith of the disciples, their life, the Apostle Paul, and the history of the Church ever since. It is not too much to say that whether you judge by adequate human testimony, or by the proof of history, no event has more sufficient external evidence for its objective reality than the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Study 19: The Christ of the Church

First Day: The Epistles Demand the Christ of Our Gospels

1. The figure of our gospels is also required to account for the epistles of the New Testament. In these books, unsurpassed for ethical power and religious insight, there is a passionate love to an invisible Lord, Jesus Christ. The words come not as moral commonplaces or ethical truisms, but aglow with a power that constrains attention. The writers placed extraordinary value on their message because of the magnitude of the Person with whom it was concerned. Now the naturalistic critic not only does not account for our gospels, but he leaves the epistles and their Christian life hanging in the air, and quite unintelligible historically. The Christian view is that the Christ whose life is accurately narrated in our gospels Himself is the reason for the apostolic interpretation of it in the epistles, *i. e.,* His disciples did not misunderstand either His Person or His ideals.

2. It is admitted that the Jesus of naturalism could not have produced the results which were effected by the Christians' love to Christ. "It was far easier for men outside of Jewry to look upon the bearer to them of such treasures of life [those promised in the gospels] as a god than as a mere man; and even Hellenistic Jews must translate His personality into the supernatural to derive from it such spiritual gifts as their education had prepared them to receive" ("Encyclopædia Biblica," "Son of God," § 25). In other words the Christ of the New Testament is a sufficient motive power to have given rise to the new Christian life, the "historic" Jesus was not.

3. Whence then came this "Christ of the Church," the Jesus Christ of the epistles? From what elements was this conception reared round Jesus of Nazareth, as a huge structure is built about a narrow foundation, wing added to wing, story to story? This constitutes, as we have seen, the most acute problem of the modern defence of our religion, for what the scholar discovers to-day is proclaimed on the housetops to-morrow, and ruthless will be the work when reality strikes through the gossamer fabric of mere imagination. We need truth only to bear the burden of this world's ills. (Read Browning's "Christmas Eve," xiv.—xviii.)

Study 19: The Christ of the Church

Second Day: Not a Creation of Old Testament Conceptions

1. Since we are told by naturalism that we cannot now with certainty get to know the historical Jesus, but only "the Christ-figure of the primitive Christian faith," the next step is to account for this creation itself. For this purpose the Old Testament, contemporary Jewish thought, Greek, and even Buddhistic parallels are adduced as materials out of which the great Christian thinkers wrought up the Jesus of history into the Christ of the Church.

2. It is true that the Jesus of the New Testament is inexplicable apart from the Old Testament. Indeed we have already seen that every vital conception of Jehovah is applied to Christ, and all the spiritual prophecies with respect to the theocracy are shown to be fulfilled in His kingdom. The Old Testament is a storehouse of unsurpassed wealth for the student of the New Testament. However different from ours may be the method employed by writers of the New Testament to prove in detail that the promises of the old covenant are fulfilled in the New, it is very evident that they have penetrated to the living stream of truth which underlies all the history and literature of the Old Testament, and they prove that in quality it is the same stream as has found its way to the surface in such overflowing purity in Jesus Christ.

3. It is easy to unlock the secrets of the Old Testament when we have the historic Jesus Christ as the Key. But it would be impossible to start from the texts of the Old Testament and construct from them alone the Jesus Christ of the New. In fact Jesus Himself was the first one to open up the Scriptures to men. The voice of the prophets had been stilled. The scribes had so overloaded the letter of the books with traditional interpretations as to bury the truth beneath their rubbish. Jesus restores to the people a lost Bible, speaking with authority as He explains how the eternal truths of prophecy concerning the Servant of the Lord, the remnant of true Israel, the Kingdom of the Son of Man and the Day of the Lord came to completion in Himself.

4. Naturalism assumes on the part of the inspired and prophetic personalities of the early Church the conviction that since Jesus was the Messiah He must surpass in grandeur those great figures of the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah. So they decked Him out in a miraculous equipment surpassing the powers of those men of God. But the old recurrent difficulty appears. (a) Whence arose the majestic, harmonious Person, the most splendid that has ever entered into the mind to conceive? How did the early Christians weave these disjointed prophecies of Ps. 2, Dan. 7, and Isaiah, together with suggestions from the life and work of Moses and Elijah, into that Son of God whom the Church loved, not as an ideal figure, but as a living Person, with most passionate devotion. (b) How came it that Jews, a people who at this time had magnified more than any other the distance between God and man, overcame their horror of blasphemy, and invested the Man Jesus with these sovereign attributes of Jehovah?

Study 19: The Christ of the Church

Third Day: The Pauline Christ not a Creation of Jewish Thought

1. It is not denied that the writers of the New Testament were influenced by the thought of their time. They used the language of their contemporaries. Along with this went of necessity other conceptions, some of which were directly transmuted into vehicles for Christian thought, while others were almost entirely transfigured when they became adjusted to the new religious ideas. The Pharisaic system, for example, and the struggle for a free gospel to the Gentiles accounts largely for the form into which Paul threw some of his epistles. But the kernel of his gospel is not Pharisaic. So also in the Epistle to the Hebrews the Jewish ritual becomes the foil for the universal Christian truths as to sacrifice and worship.

2. But to say that when Paul was once persuaded that Jesus was the Messiah, he drew from the theology in which he was educated the principal strands for the tapestry upon which Jesus Christ stands out as a glorious masterpiece of his own contriving, is to ignore not only his own testimony, but the real nature of current Jewish conceptions.

3. The contemporary Jewish writings are a bewildering bundle of materials from which some parallel might be brought forward to support almost any doctrine. Their Messianic figure was so indistinct in its outlines that it is difficult to determine what was really essential in it, while some of the Jewish apocalypses might give ground to the view that the Messiah was hardly a part of the hope of later Judaism (see Bousset, "Die Religion des Judenthums," p. 209). "Of a transcendental conception of His person, of a conception of Him as the bringer of a new revelation, or indeed of a redemptive, sin-removing activity, there is seldom a trace in the average Jewish writings" (218). "With perfect truth Dalman asserts that the thought of a preëxistent Messiah was quite alien to Judaism, and that we must be very cautious in assuming that there were ideas of preëxistence in this conception" (251).

4. Even if the Jewish speculations were richer than they are, they could not account for the Christ of Paul, for He was no complex of ideas, but a living Person. Paul does not present his gospel as a learned teacher, but as an impassioned preacher redeemed by grace. His own life consists of two halves. Once he lived as a Jew; now he lives in Christ. Is the language of Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:13-19, theory, or conviction rooted in overwhelming love? Who ever loved a figure in fiction as Paul or any average Christian loved Jesus Christ?

Study 19: The Christ of the Church

Fourth Day: The Johannine Christ is not the Product of Speculative Thought.

1. It is equally hopeless to attempt a construction of the Christ of the fourth gospel out of Paulinism, Greek mysticism, and the Græco-Jewish philosophy. Philo of Alexandria was probably well-known to some of the writers of the New Testament, notably the author of Hebrews; but his doctrine of the Logos is quite different from what we read of the Divine Word in John 1:1-18. In Greek philosophy as represented by Philo, the Logos is a purely intellectual conception arising from the Greek view of the contrast between matter and spirit. The Logos was the personified divine reason, the concrete thought of God, which seemed to serve as a bridge between God and the world.

2. But the case is quite different with the fourth evangelist. Unlike that of the Greek schools his interest is not in the external world and the relations of finite and infinite. Moral not intellectual difficulties face him. "World" for him means "world of sinful men." What is his view of creation? (John 1:1-4; 5:17, 19, 20; 17:5, 24.) Is its source in reason or in a loving will? Philo could never have written John 1:14. Moreover, the term Logos does not occur in the gospel after the first eighteen verses. The evangelist's problem is to set forth Christ as the Son of God who, having created this world of men, into which sin has entered, has by His life and death brought eternal life to those who will believe on Him (John 20:31).

3. The fourth evangelist is a lover not a speculative thinker. He has discovered a Person who is for him the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Life is his favorite word, a life of love, and sacrifice, and power, found in abundance in Jesus Christ, who is depicted in a thoroughly human form and environment. In the profoundest parts of the gospel (13:31—17) there is no trace of cold intellectualism, but these discourses palpitate with the warmest personal emotion.

4. Even the most radical scholars ("Encyclopædia Biblica," article "John, Son of Zebedee," § 62) admit that the conception of God is interpreted in the fourth gospel with a depth unmatched elsewhere. God is the loving Father who has sent His Son to redeem the world from sin, the awfulness of which is most vividly realized by the sensitive soul of the evangelist. Is not the simplest solution that Jesus Himself was what John thought Him to be? that the One whom John, Paul, and every Christian writer adore was the source of these truths embodied in the "Christ of the Church" which meet the permanent needs of men? (See the remarkable book, "The Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel," by J. Drummond.)

Study 19: The Christ of the Church

Fifth Day: Jesus Christ Revealed in the Christian Church

1. The life of Jesus in Galilee did not exhaust the life of Christ. That was but one episode in His career. The Christ must be read in the life of His Church, for Jesus in His larger life has been creating history since the days by the lake Gennesaret. We cannot understand Him apart from what He has been doing through the centuries. His Church is the most marvelous creation of history, its growth being as vigorous to-day as ever.

2. It is not right to strip off all that life and thought in which the gospel from the beginning down to the present has found expression, and to place the essence of the gospel in one or two simple ethical maxims that Jesus preached. The Holy Spirit of God was promised by Jesus to His followers, and we believe that each age has had a larger appreciation of the truth of the gospel than any that preceded it. The meaning of the life incarnate in Jesus is becoming plainer from century to century in the Church of God. "Particular and changing forms of the development of Christianity in so far as they are variable are not of its essence . . . . but it is the general traits of its figure, the elements of its life, and their characteristic properties that constitute its essence, and this essence is unchangeable like that of a living being, which is the same as long as it lives and in the measure of its life" (Loisy).

3. But what is the Church? Does it consist in organization, or in a common spiritual life? The answer to this should be plain from studies 2 and 3. In Eph. 3:18 there are these very significant words, "with all the saints." Full knowledge of the Christ will not be possible till the roll of the saints is complete and each one tells his story. These saints compose the Church. Its foundation is given in Matt. 16:16-18; 1 Cor. 3:11. If Peter was the first Christian, the Church is the body of believers whose life is hid with Christ in God (Eph. 4:3-16). Therefore it cuts right across religious denominations. Unfortunately a strange delusion often blinds men, but wherever there is faith in and love towards Christ there is true unity of spirit. The Son of man has multitudes of folds to-day, but only one flock (John 10:16 R. V.). God His Father is the great Shepherd and Bishop of the souls of men (1 Peter 2:25), and He chooses them from every denomination, many perhaps who belong to none. This loyalty to the living Son of Man which we call faith is the deepest motive in the Christian heart. It may be as intangible as gravitation, but it is an elemental power cementing the Kingdom of God whose foundations cannot be shaken.

Study 19: The Christ of the Church

Sixth Day: The Mind of Christ is Reproduced in the Believer

1. The Christian life and character are a powerful proof of the truth of the apostolic gospel because they issue from devotion to Jesus Christ as He is set forth in the New Testament. The Christian of to-day boasts in the language of Paul that he is the slave of Christ. What must Christ be if this profession of servitude to Himself which His disciples have acknowledged through our era has not degraded the devotees? Is any mortal man sufficiently perfect, so safe in his judgments and sympathies as to be chosen for the ideal of the race? Why does a man who is worshiped or slavishly followed so soon become debased and degrade his admirers?

2. But the slavery of Christ has resulted in the highest freedom (Gal. 5:13), and in the truest and most heroic types of manhood. Frequently in history it is known that men of power have gathered round a hero with boundless admiration of him, but the next generation presents the world with successors who, being out of touch with the living personality, only copy slavishly the vices or the superficial virtues of their heroic type. They fall into a deadly worship of the letter. But it is not so with Christ. To-day He produces as heroic, original and virile manhood as He did in the first century.

3. The worship of Jesus is not a literal copying of His earthly life. His surroundings and works in Galilee cannot be reproduced to-day. We live in a different world. Who would profess to work His miracles, or even to apply every saying of His literally to the present? That life of Galilee was not exhausted by its contemporary appreciation. The teaching and principles of Christ are simple but profound, and are to be fathomed only by the repeated searchings of every age, just as in tropical seas there are treasures which seem to lie within reach, but are brought to the surface only by great toil in the depths.

4. The Christian character springs from "the mind of Jesus" (1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5; Heb. 10:9, 10; 1 John 4:12-17). This is discovered chiefly in the gospels, and to-day to the great blessing of Christendom they are being studied more closely than ever. The dew seems to be always upon them as in the morning of a new day. These gospels make the mind of Christ concrete to us. His eternal, loving Spirit becomes more real and human to us, as we listen to His words and read His character in His works and conduct. We follow in His steps by allowing His living Spirit to direct us in the way that Jesus would walk were He now incarnate again on earth (1 Peter 2:21).

Study 19: The Christ of the Church

Seventh Day: The Quality of the Christian Mind

1. The conception of God in the Christian ideal is the purest the world has known. Notwithstanding objections raised at times in the name of philosophy, and the age-long protest against deifying a man, there flourishes in the Christian Church, where Jesus Christ has always been worshiped as divine, the richest and most potent belief in God as the universal loving Father, whose majesty is unapproachable, and whose life is immanent in this world of which He is the Creator and Sovereign. Deism has been repudiated by the Christian mind. Those who worship Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God, everywhere believe in God as the one and only wise God, the loving Father of Jew and Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free.

2. The Christian mind is possessed by an exceeding great sense of sin. Unquestionably the life of Christ on earth, His awful death at the hands of godless men, and His resurrection have created in Christendom an intense conviction of the hideousness of sin. And this is a discovery that each individual Christian must make for himself. The vision of the Christ has filled the Christian mind with penitential sorrow, which no theories as to the origin and nature of evil have been able to dispel. Sin is felt to be more than ignorance. It has made a nest within the heart, which has poisoned the blood with its hatching. Whenever the Jesus of the gospels is preached the consciousness of guilt is deepened.

3. Paradoxical, however, as it may appear, the perfection of Christ's character instead of repelling men by the thought of its being unattainable has drawn the sinful towards Him. Moral approach to Christ is based on penitence. A return to the pure Christ of the gospels has always meant an increasing ethical impulse to the Church. It is just where Christ is reverenced as divine that His life constitutes the ideal. His incomparable ethical altitude becomes the source of unexampled moral effort. Those who realize most vividly the awfulness of the world's sin are least hopeless of it. So Jesus Christ has produced in the Christian mind profound penitence, but a new and hopeful energy of loving effort to reclaim others. The Christian character is thus distinguished by an inexhaustible dynamic of love, flowing from the primal act of love revealed in the self-sacrifice of the Son of God.

Study 20: The Witness of the Works of the Living Christ

First Day: The Gospel is Still the Living Word of God

1. There has been a constant reproduction of Christian character down to the present, as appears not only from the moral tone of the Western world, but in the spiritual heroes, who in almost unbroken line have succeeded not unworthily the great personalities of the apostolic age. Origen, Athanasius, Augustine, St. Francis, Anselm, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, Edwards, and the leaders of the modern missionary enterprise are a proof of the unceasing creative power of the gospel.

2. More pervasive, though less tangible, has been the influence of the gospel manifested by the fruitfulness of average lives in Christian graces, and by the choice characters hidden away in those quiet homes, which give the nations their strength, and from which their great men come. Justice, purity, kindliness, the basal virtues of Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon life, flourish in the godly households of our Western world. (See Lecky, "European Morals," II., 100.)

3. Consider the ideals and heroes of these countries. The Teutonic race of to-day has been largely moulded by Luther's Bible, and Luther is, in spite of many other influences, the real father of the Protestant German people. Of England there is no truer ideal than Alfred the King, who loved to serve his people and give them the enlightenment of the gospel. Any nation is blessed which has such a figure in the background of its history. English literature, excelled by none in the elevation of its tone, is most truly national in those writers who are inspired by the principles of the gospel. Equally true is this of America, for the noblest and most distinctive portions of her literature are not only, like that of England, saturated with the Bible, but are creations of the sturdiest Puritan life, while her greatest heroes are sprung from religious soil. The like holds true of the Huguenots of France, perhaps the noblest specimens of Western manhood.

4. Further, the gospel has kept its hold upon the growing mind and thought of the world. "It has fed the conscience and refined the affections" of men whose philosophic or scientific theories may have often seemed at first to conflict with it. But as truth has advanced the essence of the gospel has remained untouched, some dogmas of theology merely having suffered change. Men of the highest philosophic and scientific attainments remain as in the past humble believers in Christ.

5. Now "a universal and continuous assent to any proposition is *prima facie* a strong presumption in favor of its truth. . . . . The regulative ideas of reason are in fact the strongest forces in the world, and their power is nowhere more clearly traceable than in the spiritual history of humanity. As regards conscience there can be no doubt that as man rises in the scale of being it becomes clearer and stronger, rules more effectively the whole mind and conduct, and gradually vanquishes the views of God, and of God's relations to mankind which grieve and offend it" (Flint's "Agnosticism"). But we find the gospel to be still the strongest moral force among the virile nations of the world, and Christian thought adapting itself securely without loss of its essence to changing intellectual conditions. Is not this a strong evidence that it is still the *living* word of God?

Study 20: The Witness of the Works of the Living Christ

SECOND DAY: THE BIRTH OF PHILANTHROPY

1. "The great characteristic of Christianity and the proof of its divinity is that it has been the main source of the moral development of Europe" (Lecky). "There can be little doubt that for nearly two hundred years after its establishment in Europe, the Christian community exhibited a moral purity which, if it has been equalled has never for any long period been surpassed (Lecky, "European Morals," II., 11).

2. "There can be no question that neither in practice nor in theory, neither in the institutions that were founded nor in the place that was assigned to it in the scale of duties, did charity in antiquity occupy a position at all comparable to that which it has obtained by Christianity. . . . . Besides its general influence in stimulating the affections, it effected a complete revolution in this sphere, by regarding the poor as the special representatives of the Christian Founder, and thus making the love of Christ, rather than the love of man, the principle of charity. . . . . A Roman lady, named Fabiola, in the fourth century, founded at Rome as an act of penance, the first public hospital, and the charity planted by that woman's hand overspread the world, and will alleviate to the end of time the darkest anguish of humanity" (Lecky, II., 78, 79, 80).

3. Along with this has gone the mitigation of cruelty and an increase in the regard for human life. The lot of woman has been improved, and the sacredness of the family and of marriage greatly enhanced. Unquestionably this is to be traced to the influence of the gospel. Slavery also from being softened, as it was at once with the introduction of the gospel, came to be regarded as an outrage on the Christian conscience, and its overthrow in Great Britain, at least, may be traced almost directly to men whose motives were inspired by the strongest evangelical conviction (see Morley's "Gladstone," I., 202, note).

4. These ameliorations of life were naturally confined at first to the home and the nation, but as time went on the principles of the gospel asserted themselves in the wider life of humanity. "International law is based on Christian principles. . . . . Grotius's *De Jure* was an endeavor to present in orderly and codified form the customs and maxims which had grown out of the appreciation of Christian principles" (article "Christianity," "Encyclopædia Brittanica," Ed. 10, 1903). To-day the problems of human life are still numerous, but progress is visible in the direction of the extension of the principle of arbitration both to international and industrial activities.

5. It is a patent fact that of all the forces which in the past have wrought towards these beneficent issues, and which are active in the present, none have been greater than the Christian Church. Indeed how many communities are there which do not depend for their most untiring workers in philanthropy to a great extent upon the devoted members of the Christian Church? (See Loring Brace's "Gesta Christi").

Study 20:

Third Day: The Gospel a Perennial Source of Reform Within the Church

1. Objection is often taken to the argument for the proof of the gospel from its effects in Christendom by referring to the inglorious record of the Christian Church. Perhaps it would be difficult to find better expression for it than in these words of the impartial historian, Lecky: "In the first two centuries of the Christian Church the moral elevation was extremely high, and was constantly appealed to as a proof of the divinity of the creed. In the century before the conversion of Constantine a marked depression was already manifest. The two centuries after Constantine are uniformly represented by the Fathers as a period of general and scandalous vice. The ecclesiastical civilization that followed, though not without its distinctive merits, assuredly supplies no justification of the common boast about the regeneration of society by the Church."

2. This indictment is thoroughly moderate. But it is to be observed that no severer criticism has ever been passed upon organized Christianity than by members of the Christian Church. Never have there been voices wanting to protest against un-Christian conduct within the Church. Appeal was and still is taken to the apostolic gospel as against secularized officialism, tyrannical systems, or lifeless creeds. The cry, "Back to the Gospel," or "Back to Christ," is a healthy sign and the proof of a living Church. To think of the reformation as having come like a bolt from the blue is unhistorical. It was the leaping into flame of a spirit of protest against distortion of the gospel, which had been smouldering for centuries throughout Western Christendom. And every revival of religion since, *e. g.*, Puritanism or Methodism, has been a conscious return to some vital principle of the apostolic gospel which had fallen into abeyance.

3. Jesus was never wearied warning His followers that His kingdom was not to be furthered by the selfish principles of worldly governments. From the day of His temptation He kept this clearly before Him (Mark 10:42-45). Is it fair to charge His gospel with failure when selfish men using His name and His words but possessing little of His Spirit have, in His own despite, supported ecclesiastical or intellectual systems, which He would either have disowned or have regarded as inadequate? (Matt. 7:22, 23).

Study 20:

Fourth Day: The Real Though Necessarily Slow Progress of the Gospel

1. A more modern objection to the power of the gospel is the sorry spectacle of the slums of our cities, and our civic, national and international vices. The Mohammedan will point with scorn at our drunkenness, the Oriental at the greed of Western peoples, and the thoughtful Buddhist at our materialism. Even the Anglo-Saxon critic, by no means always unsympathetic, is often staggered by the impotency of the gospel principles in our modern life.

2. Several considerations modify this objection. The Christian ideal has made progress, and Christendom, wherever the gospel as it stands in the New Testament has been faithfully proclaimed, is far ahead of the rest of the world in the moral ideal it sets before itself. The Western world, for example, has a moral conscience. There is a spirit, often indeed elusive but most real, which compels moral obligation, reciprocal duties between man and man, human pity, and has made certain things impossible.

3. Those possessed by the Spirit of the gospel are the most active in facing the deplorable conditions of modern life, and their work has proved to be not ineffective. On none does the weight of present ills rest more heavily than on those whose sense of their shame is keenest. This is a powerful motive for unflagging philanthropic effort.

4. The progress of the gospel is bound to vary with the soil of the hearts on which the good seed falls. Jesus warned His disciples not to be too enthusiastic about returns. The moral and spiritual renewal of the individual must in most cases be a slow displacement of old and deeply ingrained habits by better conduct.

5. Jesus also taught that the kingdom would be antagonized by a virulent spirit of evil. This is evident in the anarchistic elements which hate the gospel, for its success means their annihilation. Mammon also in an infinite variety of shapes among rich and poor works subtly upon the hearts of men. And our lapsed masses are part of the awful price we are paying for the mistakes of the Church in the past. Their spiritual faculties are atrophied, their religious natures paralyzed. But the only true weapon of the gospel is its work of love and its appeal to the spiritual within the heart. Where this has almost ceased to be responsive from whatever cause, it can be but slowly recovered, and the delicate spiritual sense requires time to subdue the coarse elements of Mammon and self. In some unfortunately there seems to be nothing but hatred of the good. Did not Jesus Himself lose hope of some? (Mark 3:29.)

Study 20:

Fifth Day: Foreign Missions a Proof of the Vitality of the Gospel

1. There is no more encouraging proof of the vitality of the gospel than the strong enthusiasm with which missionary endeavor has been reborn during the past century. A faith that will make sacrifices is a living faith. Missions show that the gospel can still produce the heroic. The principles of the kingdom enunciated in Matt. 16:24, 25; 19:27-30 were not exhausted in the first century. Is this persistent heroism based on delusion? Are only the selfish ruled by reason?

2. The success of missions may be estimated by the reproduction of the Christian type of character even in the most unlikely quarters. A sense of sin is created within converts from heathenism which expresses itself naturally in the words of Scripture, a conscience regulated by the authority of Jesus as a living Person, and a character approximating in its virtues to the Christian ideal. Threadbare often enough the garment of the new man may appear it is true, but far oftener it is surprisingly rich, and in its simplicity puts to shame the fashions of older communities. Above all the old passionate love to Jesus the unseen Friend, their Redeemer and Lord, is repeated.

3. Multitudes of these converts to-day are winning their lives by seeming to throw them away in the service of the kingdom or the endurance of persecution (Luke 21:19). There is the daring devotion of the South Sea Islanders, who leave their homes and often are martyred by cannibals in their desire to prepare the way for the white missionary. There was the faithfulness of the Chinese converts during the late war, and there is the fact that among the blacks of South Africa "the natives who have been educated in various churches form an almost negligible element in the criminal class." We should not expect the rich harvest of autumn fruit, but the tender shoots of Christian character are manifest on nearly every mission field.

4. The gospel also dispossesses the half-truths of other religions by its fuller light. This effect is to be marked not only by direct conversions, but by the healthier moral atmosphere which it creates in heathen lands. For example in India, chiefly as a result of missionary effort, the pagan spirit has become more shy in professing its shameless mythology or worship. "Christianity's method is silent, slow, certain. It undermines rather than violently overthrows old systems. It deals with old false beliefs or old evils which oppress mankind rather by taking the spirit and life out of them, by substituting something higher, than by directly attacking them" (Stewart, "Dawn in Darkest Africa").

Study 20:

Sixth Day: Objections to the Proof of the Gospel from Missions

1. But missions do not lack critics. It is asserted that Christianity wins its successes only in competition with religions of inferior grade. Against Mohammedanism, *e. g.*, the gospel is said to make little headway, nay, indeed, to be outdistanced by it in overtaking the races of Africa. In so far as this is so it is partly because "the good is the enemy of the best." Islam has given these pagan races something better than they knew. But this gift itself has made those races more impervious to the nobler ethical ideal of the gospel. Appealing to pride and force, with a simple conception of God, and a few moral demands so much less stringent than those of the Christian missionary, Islam sterilizes the native mind. But if it be gaining in Africa, it seems to be undergoing disintegregation in Persia, while in India Christianity is advancing in a far greater ratio than the natural increase of the population.

2. It is also often urged that many of the results, which the Christian assigns to the preaching of the gospel in heathen lands, are in reality to be ascribed to the progress of Western thought and civilization. We are not in a position to apportion the relative influence of education, civilization and the gospel, all of them doubtless potent factors in the upward trend of life. But it may be confidently affirmed that the Hindu educated only in secular Western beliefs is to-day proving to be a social menace to India, because he is "wandering between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born." Further, in West Africa modern commerce has really degraded the native races, and "all modern experience shows that civilization without Christianity has never civilized races that have fallen to the lowest levels" (Stewart, "Dawn in Darkest Africa").

3. It is historically unjust to compare the growth of modern missions and the character of the individual convert with the results of the first preaching of the apostolic age, to the detriment of the former. The conditions are not similar. From Persia to the Western ocean the finest moral elements of that world worshiped in the synagogues as Jews or as proselytes, and from these a steady stream poured into the Christian Church. There was a common language, common religious conceptions, and the world was ready to listen. To-day the missionary goes to peoples to whose language and ways he is an alien with a gospel expressed in terms of foreign thought. Further, where the people have an inkling of the new religion, they have been in many cases led to regard it with distrust because of the presence of nominal adherents whose conduct, whether in commerce or private morals, only degrades their faith. If Christianity professed by white or black is not held as a living faith, it is soon worsted by the awful practice of the unrestrained natural man in heathenism.

Study 20:

Seventh Day: The Gospel of the Missionary is the Gospel of the New Testament

1. The uniform testimony of foreign missionaries is that the source of their power is the Jesus Christ of the New Testament. No class of Christians accept Him more eagerly as their Lord. None lay greater stress on His supernatural character, nor on the immense motive which the death of the Son of God supplies for their own life and the winning of converts. Occasionally indeed they express their belief in terms which are crude and realistic, but therewith goes a prodigious amount of conviction. The educated man with a critical philosophical faculty sees perhaps only the inadequate expression of this faith, and overlooks the immense dynamic which it commands. Whatever there may be of theories or outgrown creeds is carried on the surface of a glowing white-hot heart of love towards the living Person, Jesus Christ, who has redeemed him. The lover has insight into the truth of the historic gospel.

2. Missionary societies and the various national institutions for the spread of the Bible go on the assumption that the figure of Jesus Christ stands forth clearly enough in the gospels and epistles to enchant the cultured Brahmin, the Chinese literati, the African villager, and the cannibals of the South Seas. They believe that one and the same Jesus Christ is found from the beginning to the end of the New Testament: and neither the promoters of these agencies nor their missionaries would have dreamt of sending any other gospel than that of Paul or John. "After many years' trial in different countries, and under every variety of circumstance the Moravian brethren have found that the simple testimony of the sufferings and death of Christ told by a missionary possessed by an experimental sense of His love, has been the most effectual and certain means of converting the heathen" (Stewart).

3. Christianity claims to be the absolute religion because it presents to the world the highest possible conception of God as the Holy Father, the noblest ideal and destiny for human nature, and the means of realizing this through a living superhuman Person, Jesus Christ. By the dynamic of His life and the motive of His love He lifts the helpless world out of its sin into life eternal. Revelation is of the essence of the gospel. It is supernatural throughout in that its truth is not the result of man's unaided devising. Our danger to-day is lest a narrow view of nature should weaken our conviction in the supernatural, and that Christianity should degenerate into a system of ethics. The sanctions of Christian morality have always reposed on the tremendous fact that in the historic gospel there is a revelation of the Son of God, who died and rose to save the world from sin.

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